

SERMONS,
AND
PLANS OF SERMONS,
ON MANY OF THE MOST IMPORTANT TEXTS OF
HOLY SCRIPTURE.

BY THE LATE REV JOSEPH BENSON.

Την διακονίαν σου πληροφορησόν.—2 Tim. iv. 5.

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SERMONS,
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CLXXVIII.

FAITH WORKING BY LOVE.

GALATIANS V. 6.

*In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing,
nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.*

GREAT was the success of the Gospel, and very flourishing the state of the church in Galatia, till certain innovating and Judaizing zealots crept in among them, and, by degrees, perverted the simplicity of Christ's Gospel, clogging it with a variety of ceremonies and appendages, which were no part of it, and of which it had no need. By a kind of satanic influence or *fascination*, (ch. iii. 1, in Gr.) it appears that these discontented and restless men were but too successful. They overthrew the faith of many, and turned them from vital religion and practical godliness, to forms and ceremonies, and beggarly elements. They perplexed the minds of others, and greatly obstructed them in their christian course. They alienated their affections from the Apostle, and their other spiritual fathers, and

prevented them from getting any more good by their ministry, and by the eminent gifts and graces which the Lord had conferred upon them for the edification of his church. They sowed the seeds of strife and contention among the children of God, so that they were in danger of being “consumed one of another.” (Gal. v. 15.) And by all these, and similar things, they laid such insuperable stumbling-blocks in the way of infidels and of the wicked, as to put a stop to the further progress of the work of God, and the enlargement of his spiritual kingdom.—On all these accounts the mind of the Apostle could not but be extremely grieved, considering his vehement love to Christ and his people, and his deep concern for the salvation of souls. And it was this grief which drew from his pen some sentences which, while they manifest a mind deeply affected with the existing circumstances of the Galatian church, plainly prove the truth of the foregoing observations. See ch. i. 6—10; iii. 1; iv. 11—21; v. 7—15.—There is no need I should apply these passages to the state of things among you: so far as they bear any resemblance, you yourselves, my brethren, I am persuaded, have been making the application, and have already learnt some important lessons. To confirm you in these, and to lead you into a further acquaintance with that true and genuine christianity, which alone deserves your affectionate pursuit, I proceed to call your attention to the very important passage at the head of this discourse, and in which the Apostle, in one single sentence, presents us with a perfect system of experimental and practical religion.—I purpose,

I. TO NAME SOME THINGS WHICH DO NOT AVAIL, BUT WHICH, NEVERTHELESS, WE ARE IN DANGER OF SUBSTITUTING IN THE ROOM OF REAL RELIGION.

These are,—the theory of religion, which will not avail without the experience and practice of it;—the signs, which are unavailable without the thing signified; as baptism and the Lord's supper, being “outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual grace;”—the means without the end;—the form without the power.—Do none of you substitute these things in the room of religion? or, at least, rest in them, and stop short of real religion?

II. TO LAY BEFORE YOU THE RELIGION WHICH DOES AVAIL, AND SHORT OF WHICH WE MUST NOT STOP, IF WE WISH TO SAVE OUR SOULS.

It is “*Faith which worketh by love.*” Excellent things are spoken of faith: on its absolute necessity, see Heb. xi. 6; and its great importance, see Eph. ii. 8, 9.—With regard to its nature, it has the invisible God, his being and attributes, and the invisible world, for its object, and is opposed to sight or sense; (2 Cor. v. 7;) in which view its nature is to look at, and be influenced, directed, and governed by “not the things which are seen, but those which are not seen.” This was the faith of the patriarchs, (Heb. xi. 4, 5, 8, 24—27.)—It has Divine revelation for its object, and is opposed to infidelity. It is persuaded of the authenticity and genuineness of the sundry books of the Old and New Testament, and of the certain truth and deep importance of their contents, on the ground of the testimony of antiquity, their internal excellency, miracles perform-

ed in support of them, and the prophecies which they contain, many of which have already been fulfilled. By this faith “we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God,” (Heb. xi. 3.) By this, “that the law was given by Moses,” and that at “sundry times and in divers manners.” By this we believe that “in these last days God hath spoken to us by his Son;” (Heb. i. 1;) “hath so loved the world, as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have eternal life,” (John iii. 16.)—It has the testimony of God for its object, declared in that revelation, and is opposed to unbelief. This testimony chiefly concerns the Messiah, the Son of God, and our salvation, present and eternal, through him, and the way of attaining it. Faith, in this view, is spoken of by St. John, 1st Epist. v. 9—11, and intended in Mark xvi. 16; Rom. i. 16; 1 Thess. i. 5. God hath borne testimony to Jesus, by the predictions, types and shadows of the Old Testament, fulfilled in him; by his spotless life, and sublime doctrine; by his mighty miracles, and resurrection from the dead, and by the prophecies he delivered which have been fulfilled.—Hence faith, crediting the divine testimony, concerning him, views him as a Prophet, and receives and lays to heart his doctrine; as a Priest, atoning, pleading, interceding, and depends on his merits; as a King, delivering, protecting, ruling, rewarding, and applies to him for deliverance, confides in him, is subject to him, and expects his reward. And in like manner, faith acts with respect to God’s testimony concerning the salvation through Christ, in earth and in heaven, and the way of attaining it.—Further, it has God’s mercies in Christ, and his promises, for its object, and is op-

posed to diffidence, distrust, and staggering at the promises of God. (Rom. iv. 20; Heb. iii. 6, 14; xi. 13.) By this faith, Abraham and David were justified, (Rom. iv; Sarah “received strength to conceive, and was delivered of a child when past age,” (Heb. xi. 11;) by it Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac. (ver. 17.) See also ver. 20—22, 30—32. — —

The words of the text are rendered by some, “faith filled with the energy of love.” Love to God, on account of his loveliness and loving-kindness, his pardoning, adopting, regenerating love to us, always accompanies faith; inclusive also of love to Christ, his people. his ordinances, his word, his ways, and to all mankind.—Or they may be rendered, “faith effectual through love:” that is, to justify the ungodly, and give peace with God and peace of conscience; to sanctify the unholy, to regenerate, new create, cleanse, purify them; to strengthen the weak, that they may resist the devil, overcome the world, crucify the flesh, conquer sin, and disarm death; to comfort the distressed; (Rom. xv. 13;) imparting peace, hope, joy, and communion with God by faith. — —

It “worketh by love” inasmuch as it produceth in us *inward holiness* towards God, as humility, resignation, patience, contentment, zeal, and a conformity to Him whom we love; righteousness towards our neighbour; meekness, gentleness, long-suffering, benevolence; expelling from our breasts the contrary dispositions of pride, anger, malevolence; “purifying our heart by faith.”—It “worketh by love,” producing in us *outward holiness*, (Jam. ii. 14;) towards God, zeal, diligence, obedience, praise; towards our neighbour, truth, justice, mercy, charity, liberality; towards ourselves,

temperance, chastity, purity, self-denial, the taking up the daily cross, a watchful and circumspect walk. — The expression is, “*worketh*,” not it *did* or *shall* work, but *doth now* work, worketh not by fear, or even by hope chiefly, but by love. — —

INFERENCES.

Is it a fact, that nothing availeth but this? Then ought we not to take care that nothing, however specious, draw our attention from so essential an attainment?—Ought we not to examine ourselves whether we possess it? And if we have faith, whether it work by love? Again, does nothing avail in Christ Jesus but *faith*? Then what will become of thee, thou infidel, who rejectest the christian revelation? of thee, thou worldly and carnal person, that walkest altogether by sight? of thee, thou self-righteous man, who goest about to establish thine own righteousness?—Does nothing avail but *faith that worketh*? Then what will become of thee, thou antinomian, that makest void the law through faith? that “continuest in sin because grace abounds?”—Does nothing avail but *faith that worketh by love*? Then know thy emptiness, thou formalist, in whose heart the love of God and Christ was never shed abroad? Know thy deficiency likewise, thou that remainest under a “spirit of bondage to fear.” Let none therefore rest without faith which produceth love: let us not rest even in *hope*, but come forward to love: not only believe and fear, believe and hope, but believe and love. — —

CLXXIX.

THE LIFE AND WALK OF A CHRISTIAN.

GALATIANS v. 25.

If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

As true christianity is divided into two grand branches, and is partly experimental and partly practical; so, there are two particulars which are chiefly deserving of notice in the character of a real christian; his inward life and his outward conversation. With regard to both of them, he differs essentially, I do not say, merely from profane and immoral persons, but from all that are carnal and worldly, from all that are not true christians, possessed of the genuine religion of Christ. And no wonder, for the spring and rule of his life and conduct are essentially different in him from what they are in them. They are influenced and directed by the powers of nature, he by the principles of grace; they by the spirit of the world and the customs and habits of men, he by the Spirit of God and the example and laws of Christ. Hence the exhortation of the Apostle in Eph. iv. 17—23, and in the text.—Consider we,

I. THE INWARD LIFE OF A CHRISTIAN.

“If we live *in*,” or rather, *by*, “the Spirit.” It is evident the Apostle does not here speak of the life common to all men: for if he had, he needed not to have made a supposition, “*if*.” He does not speak, therefore, of natural life, whether animal or rational, consisting in the union of soul and body, and supported by

breathing, the circulation of the blood and other fluids, by the reception of food and use of exercise. Nevertheless this is, in a sense, in and by the Spirit of that God who at first “breathed into our nostrils the breath of life,” and “in whom we live and move and have our being.” (Acts xvii. 28.) But he speaks of spiritual and eternal life,—the life which man lost by the fall, (Gen. ii. 17,) and of which by nature we are all destitute. (Eph. ii. 1—3; Col. ii. 13.)—This life consists in the knowledge of God, (John xvii. 3;) his love; (1 John iv. 16;) his favour; (Psal. xxx. 5;) his image; (Eph. iv. 24;) his heavenly, spiritual, and divine nature. — By this spiritual life we have a title to eternal life, a meetness for it, and a foretaste of it.—As to the vast importance of this life, it is the end of Christ’s incarnation, (1 John iv. 9; John x. 10,) of his miracles, his doctrine, and of divine revelation, especially of the Gospel, (John xx. 31;) of the gift of the Holy Spirit, (John xiv. 16—19.) Indeed—we live by the Spirit, termed a quickening Spirit, (John vi. 63;) “a Spirit of life,” (Rom. viii. 2;) the living water, (John iv. 10, 14; vii. 37, 38;) the water of life, (Rev. xxi. 6; xxii. 17.) Hereby we are awakened, convinced, humbled, converted, and made to experience repentance unto life; living faith, (Col. ii. 12, 13;) in the living and true God, the Gospel, the Lord Jesus, and the promises whereby “the just live;” (Heb. x. 38; Gal. ii. 20;) an interest in Christ and union with him, (John xvii. 20, 21; John xiv. 20; 1 Cor. xii. 13;) when we are brought into this union, and only then we have life, (1 John v. 11, 12;) justification unto life, (Rom. v. 18;) regeneration on our entrance into this spiritual life; sanctification by the same Spirit, (1 Pet. i. 2,) whereby this life is continued and perfected.

—Those who attain this experience are said to pass from death unto life.—This life is maintained, as well as communicated, by the Spirit. If he be grieved, quenched, and done despite unto, it is lost. It is maintained also by the use of means, as the animal life is supported by breathing, food, exercise. — —

Thus we “live in the Spirit,” in union and intercourse with the Spirit, which lives and dwells in us, as our bodies live in the air or light of this world.

II. THE WALK OF A CHRISTIAN.

The walk of a christian includes his tempers, words, and works, or his whole deportment. And this walk is *by* the Spirit. (See ver. 16—26.)—By the guidance of the Spirit, including that of God’s word and providence. (Rom viii. 14.)—The support of the Spirit affords courage, fortitude, resolution, power. (Eph. iii. 16.)—The influence and drawings of the Spirit are necessary to it. Christians walk “after the Spirit.” (Rom. viii. 1, 4.)—“*In* the Spirit;” in the graces and fruits of the Spirit; in love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance,” (ver. 22.) —

APPLICATION TO THE HEARERS.

Let me inquire,—Do you live by and in the Spirit? Do you walk by and in the Spirit? If you do not *live*, you do not *walk* in the Spirit: we cannot walk without life. If you do not *walk* you do not *live* in the Spirit, or your spiritual life is in a very feeble, dying state. How great the misery of those who do not both *live* and *walk* in the Spirit, and the happiness of those that do! in regard of their own comfort, the glory of God, and the edification of others! — —

[It should here be shown how the blessing is attained and retained.]

CLXXX.

THAT WE SHOULD NOT BE WEARY IN
WELL DOING.

GALATIANS VI. 9.

*Let us not be weary in well doing; for in due season
we shall reap, if we faint not.*

“I HAVE not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God,” said the great Apostle of the Gentiles. “I have kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, testifying repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Acts xx. 27, 20.) Happy Paul! and happy congregations, that were blessed with such a minister! But how different with the christian church at large in our day! “The whole counsel of God,” and the things that are profitable to mankind, are by no means declared in every congregation of professed christians; nor are they universally understood even by those that are invested with the sacred office; much less are they believed and attended to by their hearers. I trust, however, my brethren, this is not the case with you. Many of the ministers, both in the Established Church and in other denominations, well understand and do not “shun to declare the whole counsel of God.” And you do not wish them to “keep back any thing that is

profitable:" you do not say. "Preach to us smooth things; prophesy deceit, prepare pillows for all arm-holes, and make kerchiefs upon the head of every statue; daub the wall with untempered mortar; heal our hurt slightly; let your preaching be wholly doctrinal; let it not be experimental. Or if it be also experimental, at least let it not be practical. Teach us what we ought to know and believe, and even experience, but forbear to inform us what we ought to do. Or if at any time you judge this also necessary, let it be done in a cold and lifeless manner; do not urge and insist upon obedience and good works as necessary to salvation." This I thank God, is not your language; and as I have so frequently discoursed on the doctrine of grace, and laid the foundation, I do not fear offending any of you, if I occasionally attempt to raise the superstructure, and exhort you not to be "weary in well doing," remembering that "in due season you shall reap if you faint not."

Consider,

I. WHAT IS MEANT HERE BY WELL DOING.

To prevent all mistakes on this most important subject, observe—knowing is not doing. We must take care that we do not make religion a mere science, and confound the knowledge of it with the practice. We may know all the great doctrines of the Gospel, may have just, clear, and full views of them, and yet those doctrines not have their proper influence upon our hearts and lives; not be "the power of God unto salvation." We may know the privileges of the Gospel, and the promises that make over those privileges to us, and yet not embrace those promises, nor live up to

those privileges. We may know the duties of the Gospel, and understand clearly and fully our Master's will, and yet not do it at all, or very imperfectly. (John xiii. 17.) Knowledge is necessary in order to practice, but widely different from it.—Believing is not doing. We must not confound practice with faith. Whether faith has for its object the being and attributes of God. This, though necessary to “pleasing God,” (Heb. xi. 6,) yet is different therefrom. Or, his revealed will and the truths of the Gospel; it is a different thing from obeying the Gospel, and “having our conversation according to godliness.” (Phil. i. 27.) Or, the promises, which we “see afar off, and are persuaded of and embrace,” (Heb. xi. 13;) it differs from “not being slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit them.” (Heb. vi. 12.) Or whether it has Christ for its object, is persuaded he is “the Son of God,” “able to save to the uttermost,” and “comes” to him to be saved: it differs from obeying him, (Heb. v. 9,) and treading in his steps. (1 Pet. ii. 21.) In these and such like instances faith lays a foundation for, and is indispensable to practice, yet differs from it. (Tit. iii. 8.)—[The objection from John vi. 28, 29, should here be answered.]—Feeling is not doing. We must distinguish the practice of christianity from the experience of it, and must not substitute good affections for good actions. Love to God is necessary in order to serving him, yet it is, strictly speaking, different from it. (Luke i. 74, 75; John xiv. 15.) So it may be said of love to our neighbour; of desire, suppose for holiness; “the soul of the sluggard desireth and hath nothing,” (Prov. xiii. 4;) of hope, which is purifying in its effects, but not without being accompanied with

doing; of joy, which is not the same as working righteousness, though an help to it. (Isai. lxiv. 5.) In all these instances, the experience of inward grace is the source of outward practice, though it be still different from it.—Saying is not doing. However much, and fluently, we speak of religion, describe and recommend it, even in its practice, it will not suffice without the practice: (Rom. ii. 17—23;) speaking to God in prayer, and “saying, Lord, Lord,” is not “doing his will;” (Matt. vii. 21;) and promising obedience is not obedience. “I go, Sir,” and yet he “went not.” (Matt. xxi. 30.)—Even purposing and resolving, however sincerely, to do, is not doing. But when God lays obstacles in the way, the will is then accepted for the deed. (2 Cor. viii. 12.)—Ill doing is not well doing. There must be a ceasing to do evil, and a learning to do well. (Isai. i. 16.) It is the utmost folly to suppose that our works can be, any of them, good at all, while we live in known sin; much more that they can balance or compensate for our sins.—Not every kind of well doing is here meant. To keep our bodies in temperance is well doing, but is not primarily intended; nor the using the means of grace; nor the being true, and just, and honest; but the doing good to mankind in every way in which they need assistance, according to their actual situation as poor, afflicted, ignorant, wicked, wavering, distressed, &c.

Amongst the various ways of well doing, we may mention affording relief to others, by feeding the hungry, clothing the naked; visiting with medicine and consolation the sick: instructing the ignorant; reclaiming the wicked, whether they be such as never knew the Lord, or such as have backslidden from him; con-

firming the just, and exciting them to greater diligence.—By comparing one good work with another, we shall find that to use means to prevent poverty, affliction, ignorance, wickedness, is better than remedying these evils when they oppress men; that the earlier in life these preventive means are adopted the better; that such means are adopted by providing for the proper education of children and young persons; that all the foregoing good works eminently meet in that of promoting the instruction of the children of the poor.

II. THE IMPORTANCE OF WELL DOING.

It is continually and earnestly recommended in the word of God. (Isai. i. 11—17; Mic. vi. 6—8; Matt. v. 42, 44—48; Luke vi. 27—36; Eph. iv. 32; Heb. xiii. 16; Gal. vi. 10.)—It is the grand end of all God's dispensations towards us: of creation, (Acts xvii. 24—27;) he has made us of one blood, that, being related, we might serve and do good to one another, for which end our faculties are given: of preservation, (Luke xiii. 6—9; iii. 9; Matt. iii. 10;) of redemption, (2 Cor. v. 14, 15; Tit. ii. 14;) of illumination, (1 Pet. ii. 9, 10; Eph. v. 8, 9; Col. i. 9, 10;) of justification, (Tit. iii. 7, 8;) of regeneration, (Eph. ii. 10;) of our being engrafted into, and union with, Christ; (Rom. xi. 17—22; John xv. 2;) of progressive sanctification, (Tit. ii. 14; 1 Pet. i. 22.)—It is the never failing fruit and best evidence of a work of grace; of repentance, (Matt. iii. 8; Luke iii. 8—11;) of faith, (Jam. ii. 13—20;) of the knowledge of God, (1 John ii. 3, 4;) of love to God and Christ, (1 John v. 3; John xiv. 21;) of love to mankind, (1 John iii. 16;) of an interest in Christ and union with him, (John xv. 5.)—It is represented as the hinge on

which our acquittance or condemnation will turn at the great day; (Rev. xx. 12; xxii. 12; Rom. ii. 6—11; Matt. xxv. 34—45; vii. 21—27.)—Nay, it is the condition on our complying with which depends our retaining, and much more increasing in present grace. (John xv. 2—6.)—By this means God is peculiarly pleased and glorified. (Heb. xiii. 16; Phil. iv. 18; i. 11; John xv. 8; Matt. v. 16.)—Hereby mankind are profited (Tit. iii. 8) in body, in soul, in their families, relations, friends, neighbours: the nation to which we belong is benefited. (Dan. iv. 27.) — —

But notwithstanding all this, many do not so much as begin to do well. Indeed they do not lay a foundation for it in a knowledge of the divine will, (Col. i. 9,) faith, hope, love, union with Christ, (John xv. 5,) and a new creation, (Eph. ii. 10.) Those who seem to have laid that foundation, do not build thereon. And many who do, afterwards “grow weary.”—This leads me to consider,—

III. THE DANGER LEST, AFTER WE HAVE ENTERED UPON THIS COURSE, WE SHOULD GROW WEARY.

As to the causes of such weariness: well doing, especially in some instances, is attended with difficulty. It is comparatively easy to know, believe, talk, purpose, but not so easy to *do*. Some labour of mind, some thought, some care and contrivance, some exertion of body, is often requisite in order to do good. The easiest good work, if we have it to spare, is to give our property; but the generality will have nothing to give if they be not prudent, industrious, diligent, frugal. Flesh and blood does not like labour and toil, thought and care, but ease and indolence.—Self-denial is ne-

cessary in order to well doing. We must sometimes deny our apparent interest, must deny our covetousness, in giving to others; our love of pleasure, not laying out our money in gratifying our own senses and appetites, which is sowing to the flesh; must endure hardness to do many good works; we must mortify our honour, in not expending our money on the pride of life. and disregarding the being despised. Now nature loves indulgence, and grows weary of self-denial. Suffering may await us in the course of well-doing, reproach, persecution, the cross of Christ; nature grows weary of bearing it. — —

Another cause may be found in the depravity of nature, in the carnal mind, which is “enmity to God,” and opposes doing good. For how “can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit?” The remains of the earthly, sensual, and devilish nature, even in the people of God, lust against the Spirit, (Gal. v. 17,) and make them weary of doing good.—The world is against us: the things of it, temptations arising from riches, honours, pleasures: the persons of it, whose example, advice, persuasions, promises, threatenings, are against us in well doing, pouring cold water on every kindling fire, and, as a strong stream, opposing our endeavours, and bearing down our resolutions.—The devil is against us, with his subtilty, and his power.—If possible, he will prevent us from knowing the truth; if he cannot do this, from believing it: if not this, from experiencing it; but, most of all, will he try to hinder us from doing the truth. Perhaps our schemes of well doing do not answer, and our endeavours are not successful as we expected.—We meet with difficulties and hinderances, and such as we did not look for, and from a quarter

from which we could not have anticipated them; from friends as well as enemies; the children of God, as well as of the devil; from the very objects of our charitable labours, unwilling to receive good at our hands, or returning evil for good. How then can we avoid being weary? But we must consider,

IV THE MANY AND WEIGHTY MOTIVES WE HAVE, NOT TO BE WEARY IN WELL DOING.

These may be reduced to two.—It is our duty, and our interest. Our duty:—in obedience to God, who says, “Be not weary in well doing;” (see also 1 Cor. xv. 58; Rev. ii. 10, 25; iii. 11;) and to answer the end of his dispensations towards us:—in imitation of God the Father, (Matt. v. 44, 45; Luke vi. 35, 36,) who is never weary of blessing us;—of the Lord Jesus, who in the days of his flesh constantly “went about doing good;” and persevered in so doing to the last; (John v. 17;—of the Holy Spirit, who ceases not to strive with us, to enlighten, quicken, strengthen us;—of the holy angels, who cease not to minister to us and to do us good;—of the saints of every nation and age, who distinguish themselves from others by “the works of faith and labour of love,” as well as “the patience of hope.”—Our duty, out of gratitude to God, for our creation, preservation, for the blessings of this life, the gift of his Son, his Spirit, his word, for salvation present and eternal, especially for eternal life, which is his gift:—out of gratitude to the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave us his all, (2 Cor. viii. 9,) even himself, to reproach, poverty, suffering and death, to make us “zealous of good works;” (Tit. ii. 14;) that, being redeemed and purified, we might have power, and, being laid under the

strongest obligations, might have a will, to do good:—out of gratitude to the blessed Spirit, without whose influences we should have neither inclination nor power “to do well,” but persist in sin to our ruin:—out of gratitude to God for the advantages, abilities, and opportunities, with which he furnishes us to do “good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” (Eph. ii. 10.)

Our interest.—Hereby our grace, being exercised, is continued and increased, (John xv. 2.) and so our talents, of whatever kind, (Matt. xxv. 29; 2 Cor. ix. 8.)—We have peace of mind in consequence of complying with the divine will, of properly employing our gifts and graces, of being useful to others, of glorifying God, and proceeding in the way to his kingdom. (Heb. vi. 6, 11, 12; Col. i. 22, 23.)—We shall obtain eternal life, (Rom. ii. 7; Rev. xxii. 14; 1 Tim. vi. 17—19; Gal. vi. 8,) and shall reap in proportion as we sow, and be rewarded according to our works; (Heb. vi. 10; 1 Cor. xv. 58; Rev. xxii. 12; 2 Cor. ix. 6; Rom. ii. 10;) shall “have a full reward.” (2 John 8.)—We shall be welcomed at death into everlasting habitations, by those whom we have benefited, if they go before us. Or, if they come after, shall be continually receiving an increase of fresh pleasure on their arrival. The time is not distant, when this happiness will be given us; we know not how near!—How sad the reverse of all this, if we grow weary! Our grace decreases till it is quite lost, and we are cut off from Christ, and our talents withdrawn. (John xv. 2; Matt. xxv. 29.) We have uneasiness and

* Οἱς προητοίμασεν ὁ Θεὸς ἵνα ἐν αὐτοῖς περιπατήσωμεν.
*Quibus honeste et recte factis, ut semper studeamus est eterna Dei ro-
 bundas.*—SCHLEUSNER.

distress of mind under a consciousness of not making a right use of our talents. We lose the things we have wrought. (2 John 8.) We are cast into outer darkness as unprofitable servants, and there we reap as we sowed, (Matt. xxv. 30; Gal. vi. 7;) and receive according to our works. (Rom. ii. 8, 9; Rev. xxii. 12.)—There is no way of avoiding this, but by “sowing to the Spirit:” no alternative else. Our faculties, endowments, and gifts, must be employed: if not to the Spirit, they will to the flesh: if not to God, to Belial. And between these what an essential and eternal difference! — —

CLXXXI.

A PECULIAR DUTY TO RELIEVE OUR CHRISTIAN BRETHREN.

GALATIANS vi. 10.

As we have opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.

To do good to our fellow-creatures is at once a great duty, and a great happiness. It is one grand end of our creation, preservation, and redemption. It is our high and holy calling, as christians; one principal, and the most rational way of showing our gratitude to God, and love to mankind; of imitating him, who, when on earth, “went about doing good” continually, and of recommending his religion to others. In this way we “let our light shine before men, and induce them to glorify our Father who is in heaven:” we do honour to our christian profession, and make religion appear amiable in the eyes of those around us: we silence the ob-

jections of infidels, and conciliate the regard of adversaries, and are, perhaps, the means of bringing them to God and his people. Even humanity suggests and persuades to labour in good works, for they lessen, in many ways, the miseries of our fellow creatures, and contribute to the happiness. Self-interest persuades so to do, for thus exercising our grace and talents is the certain way of having them continued and increased here, and of preparing us for an eternal reward hereafter. No wonder, then, that it is recommended by the Apostle.—We inquire,

I. WHO ARE MEANT HERE BY “THE HOUSEHOLD OF FAITH,” AS DISTINGUISHED FROM THE REST OF MANKIND?

They are not those, exclusively, of any particular denomination, unless that of christianity; and yet some denominations, given perhaps, by way of reproach, to certain sects or parties of mankind, may contain more of the household of faith than others. They are not persons of any particular mode of worship; and yet some modes of worship, being more simple, rational, and scriptural, and having less of show and formality, are certainly more favourable to true piety and virtue, or the true and spiritual worship of God, than others. They are not those of any particular creed or profession, however scriptural and orthodox. And yet it is of very great consequence to hold right opinions, as the influence of truth is very different from error upon the mind of man.—But those who have that faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, which is “of the operation of God,” (Col. ii. 12,) who have faith in him as a Teacher, a Mediator, a Saviour, a Governor: being by faith persuaded

of his doctrine, relying on his merits, drinking into his Spirit, following his example. Hereby they become "fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God." (Eph. ii. 19.) They become not only his people, his servants, but his children, by adoption and regeneration; and are fellow-subjects, fellow-servants, brethren and sisters to each other: they are lively stones in one building, of which Christ is the foundation and chief corner-stone; and living members of that body, of which he is the head.—These things cannot be affirmed of the rest of mankind. And yet all are the creatures, the offspring, rational, immortal, free, of one and the same Creator and universal Parent; yea, the property of one Redeemer.—We consider,

II. THE PECULIAR OBLIGATIONS WE ARE UNDER TO DO GOOD TO THEM.

We are under obligations to do them good as *fellow-creatures*, made of one blood, and as fellow sinners, equally fallen, corrupt, and mortal; equally redeemed and purchased; alike called and visited by the truth and grace of God, which, in different ways and degrees and times, "hath appeared unto all men," (John i. 9; Tit. ii. 11,) whether our friends or enemies, strangers or brethren.—But especially are we under obligations to do them good, as being of the *household of faith*.—Because of the near relation in which they stand to God our Father, and Christ our Redeemer: to God, as his people, his servants, his children: to Christ, as his disciples, friends, brethren and sisters, spouse, members.—Because they are peculiarly dear to the Father and the Son; (Prov. xi. 20; Isai. lxii. 4; Zeph. iii. 17;) to Christ, whose love to them is unspeakably great. (John

xv. 13—15; Eph. v. 25—30; John x. 11—15; Eph. iii. 17—19.)—Because he accounts what is done unto them as done to himself, and will acknowledge, remember, and even reward it as such. (Matt. xxv. 40.)—Because it is the chief and most striking evidence of our faith in him. We may do good to our fellow-creatures from humanity, from natural kindness, from a fear of the censure or a desire of the praise of men, from a view to our temporal interests, that similar returns may be made to us, and out of regard to our country. But to do good to others, because they are of “the household of faith,” and belong to Jesus, discovers our faith in the truth: (1 John iii. 19, 20:) in Christ, as a Teacher and a Lawgiver, who hath taught and commanded us to do this; as a Redeemer and Saviour, who hath bought and delivered us, and the objects of our benevolence; as a Governor and Judge, whose subjects we and they are, and at whose bar we shall stand. (Jam. ii. 14.)—Because it is the principal mark of our love to God, whose subjects, servants, and children they are; to Christ, to whom they are so nearly related, and to whom they are so dear; to the people of God themselves. (1 John iii. 14—24; Jam. ii. 8—14.)—Because it is the surest proof of our subjection to, and being benefited by the Gospel of Christ. (2 Cor. ix. 13.)—Because it is a sign of our being the true and genuine disciples of Christ, (John xiii. 34, 35,) and of our being “passed from death unto life.” (1 John iii. 14.)—Therefore on this point, and by this evidence, or the want of it, our condemnation or acquittal must turn at the great day. (Matt. xxv. 45.)—Because of the peculiar glory and praise that are given to God by those to whom we do good, and by others. (2 Cor. ix. 12.)—Because of the

peculiar rewards that await us from the great Judge hereafter. (Heb. vi. 10; Gal. vi. 9.)—We thus engage the prayers of the people of God for us. which shall be heard and answered. (2 Cor. ix. 14.)—They will welcome us “into everlasting habitations” hereafter, and we shall enjoy their everlasting love and gratitude. (Luke xvi. 9.) This will not be the case as to the wicked whom we may relieve.—There is much less danger of our charity being misplaced and abused, than when we relieve the wicked and unregenerate. The people of God are industrious, diligent, frugal, considerate, prudent. They have not brought their poverty or disorders upon themselves by their misconduct; or if they have, in the days of their ignorance, they are reformed, and will not do thus again, and should be encouraged. This in general. But let us inquire more particularly,

III. WHAT IS THE GOOD WE SHOULD DO TO SUCH?
ALSO WHEN AND HOW WE SHOULD DO IT?

We should do them—spiritual good, an instance of which is mentioned ver. 1, and another ver. 2, and there are many other instances.—Temporal good; an instance of which we have ver. 6. This is mentioned with honour by St. Paul, (Phil. iv. 10—18; 1 Thess. v. 12, 13.) For other instances, see 1 John iii. 17; Jam. ii. 15, 16; Isai. lviii. 7; Job xxxi. 16. As giving them food, clothing, medicine, &c. — —

But when should we do them good? While we have (*καιρος*,) *time*; while it is called to-day: this will not be long: the time of our trial is short, the reward expected everlasting. While we have *opportunity*. God’s providence is especially to be regarded in affording us

opportunities, and thereby trying the reality of our faith and love to him and to his people, and giving us the means of increasing our eternal reward. — — But how far, and in what manner must we do good? As far as we have *ability*, and in the exercise of faith, hope, love, patience, self-denial, &c. and in a spirit of humility. — —

CLXXXII.

THE RICHES OF CHRIST'S REDEEMING
ACTS.

EPHESIANS iii. 8.

Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.

WERE we to form our views of christianity upon the representations which not a few writers of the present age have given of it, we should consider the whole of it as comprehended in two particulars; in a system of doctrines to be believed, and a series of duties to be performed. And according to this representation, were we to define what it is to preach the Gospel, we should say, it is to explain and prove those doctrines, and to teach and enforce those duties. But how could this, with propriety, be termed preaching “unsearchable riches?” To render our preaching worthy of being represented in that light, many would contend it ought also to include a declaration and offer of great and glorious blessings to be received. And upon an attentive consideration of the subject, this will be found to be

the case. The privileges and blessings purchased for us by Christ, and offered to us in the Gospel, are an important, perhaps the most important, branch of christianity; and to preach the Gospel certainly implies a declaration of them, and of the terms on which they may be obtained, and an invitation of mankind to partake of them.—In what an admirable manner is this done in this Epistle to the Ephesians. Dr. Goodwin has given it as his opinion, that this is the richest and noblest of all St. Paul's Epistles, and that God intended it to be so, in order to reward the generous zeal of the Ephesian converts, manifested in burning their curious books, with a book of divine knowledge incomparably more valuable than any or all of them. And he thinks also, that the superior excellence of this Epistle is intimated by the Apostle himself in the verses preceding our text.

[Explain briefly the foregoing paragraph.]

In the striking expressions of the text, the Apostle describes the exceeding low opinion he had of himself, and the fulness of unfathomable blessings treasured up in Christ. The word *ελαχιστοτερω* is a comparative, formed from the superlative, the force of which no translation can fully or very happily express. Doubtless, St. Paul thus speaks of himself because of the enmity he had formerly borne to the christian name, and his having persecuted the church of God.* — —

* Dr. Goodwin thinks there is a reference to his name, *Paulus*, which signifies *little*, or to the lowness of his stature. But I see no probability of this, although it is certain it occasioned Chrysostom's calling him *τριπηνχης αυθρωπος*, *a man three cubits high*. Emilius Paulus, a noted general among the Romans, obtained his name, according to Ligonius, from the littleness of his stature.

But the Apostle's words evidently imply that as no man can be called and qualified "to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ," which he preached, but by grace; so that to be called and qualified to preach these riches is an honour and privilege of which the greatest scholar, greatest genius, and greatest christian is, and must account himself, utterly unworthy.—But what are we to understand by these "unsearchable riches of Christ," which the Apostle "preached among the Gentiles," and which undoubtedly the ministers of Christ ought to preach in every age and nation? I answer, they include,—his redeeming acts,—his saving benefits,—and the powers employed and the means appointed for their application to us, or to bring us to the enjoyment of them. In each of these are comprehended riches unspeakably great and excellent.—Let us consider,

I. HIS REDEEMING ACTS.

Of these, we notice, his *incarnation*. I need not prove to you that the Apostle preached this, and bore continual testimony that "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us," &c. (John i. 14;) that "God was manifest in the flesh;" (1 Tim. iii. 16;) that "forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself took part of the same;" (Heb. ii. 14.) Now in this is contained unsearchable riches. That we should have God's incarnate wisdom and word for our instructor in matters the most important, of infinite because everlasting concern to us; that he should teach us such things in a most condescending, free, and familiar way, as one of ourselves, is an unspeakable advantage and blessing. That we should be permitted to behold in him a perfect and suitable example

of humility, meekness, benevolence, patience, purity, &c. is equally an inestimable privilege. But what is yet more, by his incarnation he became God and man in one person, was qualified to be a Mediator between God and man, to atone for sin, and reconcile us, offending creatures, to our offended Creator. Nay, hereby the eternal Son of God, the Lord of glory, became one of us;—our friend, our kinsman, our brother. An alliance was formed between earth and heaven, God and man. The human nature was taken into union with the Divine, and the unsearchable riches of the Divine nature laid open to the human! How unutterable then the value of this blessing! [It may be illustrated by the riches and honour which come to a poor family by an intermarriage with a rich and great one.]

His *enduring temptation* is another of those redeeming acts of Christ to which the Evangelists and Apostles have borne witness, (Matt. iv. 1—11; Heb. ii. 17, 18; iv. 15, 16.) In this also are contained unsearchable riches. Hereby he worsted our grand adversary, Satan. And is it not of vast importance to obtain a great victory over a powerful enemy, and to know our enemies are conquered? He has hereby shown us, that it is no sin to be tempted; that the holiest and wisest of men may and will be tempted, and in what way the weakest may prevail; viz. by “the sword of the Spirit,” and “the shield of faith.” Thus also he, who has all power in heaven and earth, learned to sympathize with us, to be “touched with the feeling of our infirmities,” became willing and able to succour us in our temptations, to help and support us under our trials and troubles. And how great the comfort and encouragement thus afforded! — —

His obedience unto death. In this are comprehended unsearchable riches. This is one of those important articles of faith to which especially the Apostles were appointed to bear witness, (Luke xxiv. 46, 48;) and if they had not borne testimony to it, they would not have considered themselves as preaching the Gospel, (1 Cor. xv. 1—3; see also Phil. ii. 8; Rom. v. 6—10; 2 Cor. v. 14, 15.) By this, Christ fulfilled all righteousness, obeying the precepts, and suffering the penalty of the law for us. He expiated sin, or made satisfaction for it to eternal justice; or, as the angel predicted to Daniel, he “finished transgression, made an end of sins, made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in an everlasting righteousness.” Hereby our incalculable debt is paid, and our souls and bodies, yea our everlasting lives, are ransomed. “God is in him reconciling the world to himself, and not imputing their trespasses unto them.” (2 Cor. v. 19.) Of course, in this redeeming act are unsearchable riches; its worth to us is, and ever will be, unsearchable. — —

His resurrection from the dead. This redeeming act is of equal importance with that last mentioned, and closely connected with it. Accordingly, the Apostles every where represent their mission as being in order to their bearing testimony to this fact. (Acts i. 22; 1 Cor. xv. 4.) That unsearchable riches are included herein appears from hence, that we are hereby assured he is the Son of God, (Rom. i. 4;) that his doctrine is infallibly true, and deeply important; that, as our surety, he has paid our debt, and obtained our acquittance, and was therefore released out of the prison of the grave; that he has procured and ensured to us a resurrection of the body, and immortality, he rising as

our living head and “the first-fruits of them who sleep;” our human nature rising in him, and triumphing over death and the grave. In his resurrection, therefore, we see that our bodies shall rise and become immortal, and we are “begotten again to a lively hope.” (1 Pet. i. 3.) Hereby we learn the reasonableness and necessity of dying to sin and rising to a new life; of being “risen with Christ;” of “seeking things above,” and setting our affections on them. How unspeakable the value of all these blessings! — —

His *ascension* is the next in order of his redeeming acts. This is not to be overlooked, as it was not overlooked by our Lord and his Apostles. (John xx. 17; Heb. i. 3; iv. 14; viii. 1.) It contains unsearchable riches; for hereby also, as well as by his resurrection, we are assured he “hath purged our sins.” as the Father would not have received him to his bosom to speak on our behalf, if he had not been well pleased with his atonement. Hereby he triumphed over his and our enemies, and “made a show of them openly;” over Satan, sin, and death, which all stood in the way, and opposed the ascension and exaltation of our common human nature to heaven. (Psal. lxxviii. 18; Isai. liii. 10, 12; Phil. ii. 8—10.) Since he ascended as our forerunner, and is at the right hand of God, and has “all power in heaven and on earth,” being “head over all things to the church,” we shall ascend also. (John xiv. 2; Heb. vi. 18, 20.) To prepare us for this exaltation, he opened, through his ascension, an intercourse between heaven and earth, and received gifts for us, “that the Lord God might dwell among us.” (Psal. lxxviii. 18.) How unsearchable then the riches which his ascension brings to us! — —

His *intercession and advocateship* come next to be considered. The Prophets and Apostles have laid great stress on this. (Isai. liii. 12; Rom. viii. 34; Heb. vii. 25; 1 John ii. 1.) And they had good reason for this. How important, when we have a cause depending which involves, were it only our property, to have an able, kind, and faithful counsellor to plead for us! more especially if our liberty, and most of all if our life were involved! And if this counsellor were sure to carry every cause he undertakes! What a treasure then have we in the advocateship of Christ! The cause we have depending in the court above, involves our all to all eternity. Our property: how poor shall we be if we lose this cause! how rich if we carry it!—Our liberty: what slaves in hell if we lose it! how free in heaven if we carry it!—Our life: we must suffer death of body and soul for ever, if we lose it! and shall obtain life if we gain it! Christ is a skilful, able, kind, and faithful counsellor, and is infallible in every cause he undertakes! What a treasure, when we have a petition of importance to prefer to a king, or prince, or superior, and cannot ourselves be admitted to prefer it, to have one to do this for us, so near and dear to the person to whom it is to be presented, that he is sure to succeed! Consider then the many and important petitions we have to present for pardon, grace, direction, &c. And that Christ is ready to present them all, and is always successful. What a blessing, when, through ignorance, we know not what to ask, through sinfulness and guilt, we dare not ask, or through lukewarmness, sloth, and neglect, are indisposed to ask, to have such an one, so wise, so acceptable, so attentive and diligent to pray for us! Hence we may have comfort

and encouragement, notwithstanding the weakness of our faith, the sense of inward depravity, our various infirmities and failings, and involuntary sins! (Luke xxii. 32; Heb. iv. 14—16.) Thus our duties and imperfect services are accepted of God, (Rev. viii. 3;) and will be rewarded, (Heb. vi. 10;) and we shall at last be glorified. (John xvii. 24.) How unsearchable these riches! — —

The *final judgment* is the last and finishing act of our redemption. This is insisted on frequently and largely by the Apostles, (Acts x. 42; xvii. 31.) It implies unsearchable riches; for how desirable to us, and what an advantage if we must be judged, to be judged by one who is a friend, kinsman, brother, husband; by one who assumed our nature, with all its infirmities; who feels for us, died in our stead, will excuse our failings, manifest our virtues, judge between us and our enemies and persecutors! Being accused, what a blessing to be tried and acquitted, which God's people shall be, before men and angels; yea and applauded. As our Judge, he will assign to us a reward in proportion to our holiness, labours, and sufferings in his service. —

Deferring the two remaining heads of discourse to a future opportunity, I shall now conclude with some inferences from what has been already advanced, by way of application and improvement.

We may INFER,

The unreasonableness of those who acknowledge that Christ hath performed all these redeeming acts, and that each of them contains unsearchable riches, and yet neither lay them to heart, nor are truly concerned to partake of them. Is not this the case with many of

you? Examine yourselves on this point.—The unspeakable importance of having an interest in these redeeming acts of Christ, and, in consequence thereof, a share in these unsearchable riches. [Here it should be shown that in a certain general sense, all men have an interest in these acts, and in what peculiar sense it is necessary we should have an interest therein, in order to share in these riches.]—How this is to be attained.—We must be deeply abased and humbled under a sense of our dreadful fall, of our great ignorance, sinfulness, guilt, weakness and wretchedness, which render such unparalleled redeeming acts necessary in order to our salvation, and of our unworthiness, that the Redeemer should do and suffer these things for us, with sorrow that our sins and follies should have required it. We must have faith, viz. a persuasion that he *hath* done these things, and that he *hath* thereby purchased for us unsearchable riches, attended with confidence in him: we must have love to him who hath done and suffered so much, (1 Cor. xvi. 22;) subjection and obedience. (Heb. v. 9.)—The folly and infatuation, the guilt and misery of those who, after all he hath done, neglect or reject Christ and his unsearchable riches. Do not many of you do this? have you not done it long? how shall you escape? Though rich, and having much in this world, yet in reality possessing nothing.—The wisdom and happiness of those who believe on and accept him in faith and love, and thereby obtain a participation in his unsearchable riches! Although poor on earth, and having nothing, they are rich, and perhaps also make others rich and possessed of all things. —

CLXXXIII.

THE RICHES OF CHRIST'S SAVING BENEFITS.

SECOND PLAN, ON EPHESIANS iii. 8.

IF we take our views of the religion of our Lord Jesus Christ from the sacred Scriptures, (and from what other source can we rightly draw them?) we shall readily allow that it is not only doctrinal and practical, but also experimental. It implies what we are to experience and enjoy, as well as what we are to know and do. And as we know the things of God in vain, unless we do them, so we shall attempt to do them to little purpose, unless we experience them. Knowledge, or faith, it is true, is the root of that tree of righteousness, which is of "the planting of the Lord," but experience is the stock or body of it, which supports and nourishes all its branches and their produce; or rather, it is the sap, which arising from the root, ascends through the body of the tree into its branches, and enables them not only to put forth the leaves of a flourishing profession, and the blossoms of good dispositions, desires and resolutions, but also, and especially, to bear those "fruits of righteousness which are through Christ Jesus to the praise and glory of God."—Now this experimental part of christianity, which I speak of, includes partly the present enjoyment, and partly the future expectation of all those saving benefits of Christ, which we may consider as the second branch of his unsearchable riches, and in which is comprehended.

as well what he reveals to us, and does for us as individuals, as what he works in us, and bestows upon us. In short, it comprehends the whole of what in the New Testament is termed salvation, when it is said, "By grace we are saved, through faith," when we are commanded to "work out our salvation;" and it is asked, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation." Let this salvation then, or the saving benefits, be now the subject of our meditation, and let us inquire how it appears, that each of them contains unsearchable riches?

Now the first of these benefits is, *divine illumination*. It was foretold by Isaiah, (chap. xlii. 6, 7,) that as the Messiah should be "given for a covenant of the people," so also he should be "for a light of the Gentiles, to open the blind eyes," &c. Accordingly, when he appeared, they "that sat in darkness saw a great light," (Isai. ix. 2;) "the Dayspring from on high visited them, to give light to them that sat in darkness," (Luke i. 78.) And St. Paul was sent to "open their eyes, and turn them from darkness to light," &c. (Acts xxvi. 18.) And those who received his message, though once darkness, were now "light in the Lord," (Eph. v. 8; 1 Pet. ii. 9.) This divine illumination implies unsearchable riches; for it includes the understanding the Scriptures in all essential points, the necessity and worth of which is great indeed: the knowledge of ourselves, which is the foundation of all religion: the knowledge of God and Christ, occasioning us peace and good unspeakable, (Job xxii. 21;) and even eternal life, (John xvii. 3;) the knowledge of the "truth as it is in Jesus," or the way of salvation, (John viii. 32; xvi. 13, 14;) and consider the vast importance of this!

(Rom. ix. 30, 31; x. 2;) the knowledge of God's will, (Col. i. 9;) the necessity and usefulness of which appears from hence, that we cannot enter heaven without "doing the will" of God, (Matt. vii. 21;) and cannot do it unless we know it. — —

The second is *justification*. This is the same with the remission of sins, or imputed righteousness. (Rom. iv. 2—8.) This is enjoined to be preached by Christ, (Luke xxiv. 47,) and was preached by his Evangelists and Apostles, (Acts ii. 38; iii. 19; x. 43; xiii. 38.) The value of this appears,—from our great want of it: we are guilty and condemned, and have need to be acquitted; (Rom. iii. 23:)—from a consideration of the great and eternal misery from which it rescues us: a condemned malefactor knows the worth of a pardon; it is as valuable to him as his life, because it saves him from death:—from a consideration of the blessed and eternal life, to which it entitles us, (Tit. iii. 7.) It is as valuable, and contains riches as unsearchably great, as that everlasting felicity which is the consequence of it. How immense a treasure is a free and full justification! — —

The third is the *peculiar favour and friendship of God*. This is the never-failing fruit of justification. (Rom. v. 1,) and was continually preached by the Apostle. (2 Cor. v. 18—21; Eph. i. 6; ii. 13—19.) Think of the infinite and eternal riches, honour and felicity, implied in the favour and friendship of an all-wise, almighty, and all-gracious, infinite, and everlasting Being. — —

The fourth is *adoption into his family*. This is insisted on by the Apostles as one important end of the incarnation, life, and death of Christ, (Gal. iv. 4,) and

the never-failing fruit of faith in him. (John i. 12; Gal. iii. 26.) Adoption is an unspeakable honour and happiness. To be so nearly related to God, so peculiarly dear to him, as children to a father; to be under his peculiar direction, protection and care, having liberty of access to him as children to a father, and intercourse with him, being provided with every thing needful and useful, (Matt. vi. 33; Psal. lxxxiv. 11;) to be chastised when and as far as necessary, and to have this, with every other dispensation, made to work for our good, (Heb. xii. 10, 11; Rom. viii. 28;) to be his heirs, heirs of all he is, and of all he hath. In each of these particulars is comprehended unsearchable riches. — —

The fifth is *the Holy Spirit*. This is the fruit of Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension, (John xvi. 7; Psal. lxviii. 18,) given only through him, (Tit. iii. 6; John i. 16,) and by him, (Matt. iii. 11; John iv. 10, 14; vii. 37, 38;) and is therefore a branch of his unsearchable riches. Hereby our minds are enlightened, we are enabled to understand and relish divine things; we are prepared, by conviction of sin and of righteousness, (John xvi. 8—10,) by repentance and faith, for justification; we are assured of it, as also of God's favour and of our adoption, (Gal. iv. 6; Rom. viii. 15, 16;) we are regenerated, (John i. 13; iii. 5, 6;) are led, assisted in prayer and every duty, and comforted, (Jude 20; Rom. viii. 14, 26; xv. 13; John xiv. 16—20;) we are sanctified, viz. delivered from the power and being of sin and consecrated to God in heart and life, (Rom. viii. 2; Tit. iii. 5; 2 Thess. ii. 13; 1 Pet. i. 2;) we are enriched with all gifts and graces. (Gal. v. 22.) How unspeakable then the necessity and worth of this blessing; how unsearchable the riches contained in it! —

This leads me to notice another unspeakable benefit, implied indeed in the last mentioned, but, because of its magnitude, deserving of more particular notice, viz. *the restoration of God's image* to the soul. Man having been created in this, (Gen. i. 27,) lost it by the fall; so that he is naturally earthly, sensual, and devilish. The restoration of it is one principal end of our redemption, (Eph. v. 25—27; Rom. viii. 3, 4; Eph. iv. 20—24; 2 Pet. i. 4.) As to its nature, it implies, that, in consequence of union with God, we resemble him in wisdom, truth, justice, mercy, (Luke vi. 36,) love, (Eph. iv. 31, 32; v. 2; Col. iii. 12, 13,) purity, and holiness, (1 John iii. 3; Heb. xii. 10; 1 Pet. i. 14—16;) in all perfection, (Matt. v. 48.) In respect of the dignity, glory, and happiness of this; the most exalted intelligences, the angels, archangels, cherubim, seraphim, can have nothing greater or better than a resemblance of God. They are more or less excellent, glorious, rich, and happy, as they are more or less conformed to God. What unsearchable riches then are comprehended herein! —

Another saving benefit comprehended in Christ's unsearchable riches, and a consequence of the former, is *communion with God*. This also is the effect of Christ's incarnation, life, and death, and resurrection, (Eph. ii. 16—22.)—Hence it was prayed for by Christ (John xvii. 20—23,) promised by the Father, (2 Cor. vi. 16,) and by Christ, (John xiv. 15—23; Rev. iii. 20;) possessed by the first christians, (1 John i. 3,) and by the people of God, more or less, in every age. Consider the honour, and happiness, and advantage implied in having intercourse, intimacy, and fellowship with the first, greatest, wisest, mightiest, holiest, happiest, and best Being in the universe! with him that is absolutely

infinite and eternal! to have him with us and in us, and discovering and communicating all his glories and joys to our souls!—the unsearchable riches of this!

The last of his saving benefits is *eternal life*. This is continually spoken of and promised by our Lord and his Evangelists and Apostles, (John iii. 16; Rom. v. 21; vi. 23; 1 John v. 12, 13;) and it is such an unsearchable treasure, that it is infinite in degree, and eternal in duration. Its worth is inconceivable, were we only to consider it negatively: how great the value of a full and everlasting deliverance from temptation, sin, infirmity, affliction, pain, and death!—Still more if it be considered positively; the worth of complete perfection of body and soul, and the happiness resulting therefrom! (Phil. iii. 21; 1 Cor. xv. 43—49.)—It includes, the vision and enjoyment of God, (Matt. v. 8; 1 John iii. 2; Rev. xxi. 3,) which in the nature of things is an infinite and everlasting good: viz. the clear knowledge and enjoyment of an infinite and eternal Being! The society of patriarchs and prophets, of angels and archangels. (Luke xiii. 28; Heb. xii. 22, 23.) The heavenly inheritance; (1 Pet. i. 3;) the New Jerusalem; the new heaven and new earth; the possession absolutely of all things. (Rev. xxi. 1—7; 1 Cor. ii. 9; iii. 21—23.) —

APPLICATION.

In a way of examination. Have you seen your want of these saving benefits? Have you seen the unspeakable worth of them? Have you felt, and do you feel, sincere, earnest, constant, increasing, and restless desires after them? or thirst for them? Do these desires make you active in the use of all means?—These blessings are for you in Christ. He has procured them by

his incarnation, life, death, and resurrection, and received them in consequence of his ascension. (Psal. lxxviii. 18.) He waits to bestow them. (Acts v. 31.)—You are invited to come, and must come to him for them. (John vii. 37; Rev. xxii. 17;) But how? by faith, (John vii. 38; Gal. iii. 13, 14; Acts xiii. 38, 39;) in prayer, (John iv. 10; Luke xi. 9—13;) watchfulness, (Mark xiii. 37;) self-denial, (Rom. viii. 13.) — —

CLXXXIV.

THE RICHES IMPLIED IN THE METHODS BY WHICH CHRIST BRINGS US TO ENJOY SALVATION.

THIRD PLAN, ON EPHESIANS iii. 8.

UNSPEAKABLE mischief has arisen to the Church of Christ, and irreparable loss has been sustained by many precious souls, by means of curtailed and partial views of the Gospel; the taking a part, or some parts of the religion of Jesus, but not the whole, and putting asunder what God had joined together. The self-righteous pharisee on the one hand, and the licentious antinomian on the other, with the empty formalist in the third place, may each trace up his respective mistake to this source. He has looked at christianity only on one side: he has had but a partial view of it, and therefore has been led into his destructive error. The first mentioned character, considering the doctrines of justice, and acknowledging the necessity of obedience to the laws of Christ, did not pay equal attention to the doctrines of grace, and thus was led to endeavour to “establish

his own righteousness," instead of "submitting himself to the righteousness of God." The second saw that "by grace we are saved through faith," that we are "justified by faith without the deeds of the law;" but not observing, at the same time, that "if any man be in Christ he is a new creature," and "is created in Christ Jesus unto good works," that "in Christ Jesus" no faith availeth but that which "worketh," and that "faith without works is dead," thought himself at liberty to "continue in sin, because grace abounded:" while the dead and lukewarm formalist, who through his fuller views of the Gospel was secured against both these snares, not discerning that "the end of the commandment is love out of a pure heart, a good conscience, and faith unfeigned;" that he only "that loveth is born of God and knoweth God," but he that "loveth not knoweth not God, because God is love:" not considering that "if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his." and that unless "Christ be in us we are reprobate:" not attending to these things, he rests in "a form of godliness," without the power thereof, in a "name to live" when he is "dead."—We have already considered at large two of the three branches of Christ's unsearchable riches, viz. his *redeeming acts* and *saving benefits*, and in both of them, nay, and in all particulars comprehended in each, we have discovered treasures unfathomably great and glorious. Now that we may not starve (so to speak) in the midst of plenty, but that these treasures may be ours, let us attend to the third point,—viz. THE WAYS AND MEANS OF THEIR APPLICATION. Under this head I wish to comprehend more than may at first be supposed. I wish to include,—the properties and powers exerted,—the means and or-

dinances appointed,—and the graces to be exercised in order to bring us to the enjoyment of the riches contained in these acts and benefits of Christ. — —

I. THE PROPERTIES AND POWERS EXERTED.

The first of these is the *wisdom of our Lord*. St. Paul informs us that “in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,” (Col. ii. 3,) and that he “hath abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence,” (Eph. i. 8.) As his knowledge and his wisdom are unsearchable, so they are an unsearchable treasure to his church in general, and to every individual member of it in particular. What an advantage it is to the subjects of a king, that, if he be rich, powerful, and good, he should be very wise; and how much greater an advantage would it be, if he knew them all, and all their wants, dangers, and distresses! What an advantage to a flock when their shepherd knows all the sheep, and how to heal, strengthen, defend, and provide pasture for them! What a consolation to a child, when in want, sickness, and distress, or in bondage and captivity, to be assured that his father knows his situation, and can devise means for his relief and rescue! Now Christ, through his wisdom, is acquainted with our various hinderances and difficulties, our enemies, the snares they lay for us, the reasons and methods by which they attempt our ruin, and he devises means to bring us to himself, and then to keep us. — — *His almighty power*. What a treasure subjects have in the power of a just and good king, or children in the power of a wise and kind father! What an advantage it is to the church that Christ “has all power in heaven and on earth,” is “head over all things,” can make the

temptations of devils, and the enmity of sinners, as well as the ministry of angels, and the advice and prayers of saints, yea and absolutely “all things work together for the good” of her members; can at all times defend, strengthen, support, and comfort them, and execute every scheme his wisdom has devised for their present and eternal good. — — *His infinite love*, (Eph. iii. 18, 19.) His wisdom and power would be nothing to us, without this; this sets them to work, and keeps them employed continually for our benefit. This, therefore, is an inestimable blessing to his people, and a source of unsearchable riches. “Who gave his life, what gift can he deny?” — — *His unwearied patience*, or his forbearance and long-suffering, (2 Cor. x. 1.)—How much need had we all of this in our state of ignorance and sin! What need have we of it still! How is it exercised towards us from day to day! What a treasure is it to us! our present and eternal salvation depending upon it. — —

II. THE MEANS AND ORDINANCES APPOINTED.

As *affliction*, or the various chastisements wherewith the Lord Jesus reclaims, keeps and exercises us. Without this, probably we should never have been brought to Christ. Without this, we should not have continued in his ways: without this, we should not have made the progress we have done in holiness or usefulness: therefore, without this we should not have attained “an exceeding great and eternal weight of glory.” A child receives no small advantage from the corrections of his father, how much greater do we derive from the chastening of God, the Father of our spirits. (Heb. xii. 7—11.)—*The word of God*. Hereby Christ’s unsearch-

able riches are revealed, displayed, offered, and, as it were, bequeathed to us. Christ's redeeming acts are unfolded one after another, as in the writings of the Prophets and Evangelists, with the unsearchable riches they contain, and we are offered an interest in them, and shown how we may attain it. His saving benefits, with the riches of them, are set before us, and we are invited to come and partake of them. The word of God is a bill of spiritual and heavenly rights, a charter of sacred and divine privileges, or an attested deed of conveyance, making over to us an immense property; or it may be considered as the last will and testament of our Redeemer, bequeathing to us legacies and inheritances without end. As, then, we value a bill which the legislature has sanctioned, whereby we hold our civil rights, or a charter obtained, whereby we possess our privileges; a deed or will, whereby we prove our title, and lay claim to an estate, so should we value the word of God, whereby we know and claim, and obtain and possess unsearchable and eternal riches.—*The ordinances of God*: as baptism. Hereby we are initiated into the visible church, and called to the profession of christianity, which is a great blessing, and are introduced to a knowledge of all that is good. Hereby also the mystery of our new birth is shadowed out to us, and we ought to value even the shadow of good things. The Lord's supper is another ordinance. This both exhibits, through the medium of outward signs, the principal of Christ's redeeming acts, viz. his obedience unto death, (which pre-supposes or infers all the others,) and holds forth one and all his saving benefits to our acceptance: nay, in this institution, his very body and blood, his person and offices, his love and sufferings, his mer-

its and Spirit, his grace and glory are represented, offered, and to the faithful actually conveyed and imparted. How valuable then is this ordinance!—*The fellowship of saints*. Here Jesus himself, with all his unsearchable riches of grace and glory, is always present. (Matt. xviii. 20.) This is an emblem and earnest of heaven, and a preparation for it.—*Prayer*. In this also we have an unspeakable treasure. For it is the key with which we open the divine storehouse, and take as much of the riches of Christ as we need. — —

These are the outward means and ordinances of God, appointed to enrich our souls with the riches contained in Christ's redeeming acts and saving benefits. Hence they have in all ages been considered very precious to the saints, who have earnestly desired them, (Psal. lxxxiv. 10; xxvii. 4; lxiii. 1; Amos viii. 11, 12.) Observe the multitudes following Christ, and John the Baptist, and the Apostles.—The people of God have in all ages been willing to hazard their lives for the sake of them. They have delighted in them, (Psal. lxxxiv. 1; cxix. 103; xix. 7—12.) They have been uneasy when absent from them, (Psal. lxxxiv. 2—4; cxix. 20; xlii. 1; lxxiv. 7—10; Lament. throughout; 1 Pet. ii. 2.) They have been zealous for the purity and honour of them. So when Christ cast the buyers and sellers out of the temple, "his disciples remembered that it was written of him, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." (John ii. 17.)—As to the reason of this esteem, we may observe,—in and by these means and ordinances, Christ manifests his presence, and they have fellowship with him as well as one with another. He dwells in them, and they in him. In and by these he communicates and conveys his grace to their souls: he teaches, renews, strengthens, purifies,

and comforts them: he “spreads a table for them in the wilderness,” and they “sit under his shadow with great delight,” and banquet on his heavenly dainties. Hereby also they attain and increase.

III. THE INWARD GRACES WHICH ARE TO BE EXERCISED.

These also include unsearchable riches, because by these, Christ’s redeeming acts and saving benefits become our own. These form a third particular to be considered.—Faith, having for its object the doctrines of his word, which display his acts and benefits: the invitation and promises which make them over to us; Jesus himself, the source and centre of both, in whom the doctrines and promises “are yea and amen.” By this we obtain an interest in his redeeming acts, and become entitled to, or have a foretaste of, all his saving benefits.—Hope: Those benefits, which we cannot here partake of, we expect and desire, and hereby we both anticipate the enjoyment of them, are prepared for them, and are supported till we receive them.—Reflect on the vast worth of a well-grounded and lively hope. It is the source of patience, (Rom. viii. 25; 1 Thess. i. 3;) gratitude, (1 Pet. i. 3;) joy, (Rom. v. 2;) purity, (1 John iii. 3;) and even of good works, (1 Cor. xv. ult.; Heb. vi. 11.) Hence arise the unsearchable riches of an eternal reward.—Love: Hereby we embrace both Christ and his riches, nay, and associate with angels and saints, and “sit in heavenly places.” What a vast treasure is implied in love!—Obedience, implying watchfulness, self-denial, taking up the daily cross, walking circumspectly. This affords present peace and tranquillity, (Isai. xlviii. 18; Psal. cxix. 165.) It leads in a direct line to glory. (Rev. xxii. 14.)

IMPROVEMENT.

How important, to consider and confide in the powers and properties which Christ exerts; as his wisdom, power, love, patience, that we may be brought to enjoy his unsearchable riches.—To submit to, and take in good part, the afflictions and trials wherewith he exercises us!—To attend his word and ordinances, and look for grace in them!—To live in the exercise of every grace he communicates, with a view to the increase of faith, hope, love, and obedience! — —

CLXXXV.
CHRISTIANS EXHORTED TO UNITY.**EPHESIANS iv. 3.**

Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

As these words are contained in the Epistle for the day,* I make no apology for reading them as the subject of a discourse. Indeed the importance of unity, in all communities, especially in a society of christians, must be obvious to all reflecting persons. In recommending this virtue, however, I am sensible that (under the circumstances of many whom I now address†) I undertake a difficult task, and shall be in danger, like a person that steps in between contending combatants, of

* 17th Sunday after Trinity.

† This Sermon was delivered before a society divided on certain points.

receiving blows from the violent of all parties. *Incedo per ignes suppositos cinere doloso.* But this shall not prevent me from endeavouring at least to do my duty, in laying before you the mind and will of God respecting this important matter, which may be best done by inquiring,

I. INTO THE STATE AND CHARACTER OF THOSE TO WHOM THE ADVICE OF THE TEXT IS GIVEN.

Concerning this, we have all the information we could desire in the verses immediately following. — — The persons to whom the advice is given are all *members of one body*; they are members of Christ and of one another. In Christ's mystical body there are many members, having different stations, powers, and offices assigned them: one is placed in an elevated station, and is a discerning or directing eye: another is in a situation almost equally elevated, and is an attentive and watchful ear: a third is in a place not much if any lower, and is an instructive and warning tongue; others are constituted, so to speak, the hand and the foot.— These members, although so dissimilar in situation, ability and office, nevertheless, equally belong to the body, (1 Cor. xii. 4—12, 15—20.) They depend upon, and have union and intercourse with, their living head and with one another. (1 Cor. xii. 21.) Christ is to them all as a head of guidance, of government, and of vital influence. No member, not even the eye, the tongue, or the hand, can any more guide or govern the rest than it can support itself. Of this body we become members, by being “baptized” with, and “made to drink into one Spirit.” (1 Cor. xii. 13.) — —

They are all inhabited *by one Spirit*, As a Spirit of

truth, he enlightens them in the knowledge of themselves, of God and of Christ, and of the way of salvation: as a Spirit of grace, he quickens them, begets in them repentance, faith, the new birth: as a Comforter, he assures them of their justification and adoption, and inspires them with hope and joy: as a Spirit of power, he strengthens them; as a Spirit of holiness, he renews them. (1 Pet. i. 2; 2 Thess. ii. 13.) — —

They are *called in one hope* of their calling.—“Called” from similar ignorance, guilt, depravity, weakness, misery, and danger, to a similar state of knowledge, acceptance, conformity to God, and fellowship with him, of holiness and happiness: in a similar way, by the same kind, superintending and watchful Providence, by the same enlightening, quickening, and purifying Word, and the same regenerating, strengthening, and renewing Spirit, and perhaps, also, by the very same ministers.—“In one hope.” The object of their hope is one, the same immortality of the soul, the same resurrection of the body, one and the same new heaven and new earth, one heavenly kingdom, one incorruptible inheritance, one Mount Zion, one city of the living God, one heavenly Jerusalem, one innumerable company of angels, one society of the just made perfect, one house, one family of God. The hope itself is one in its foundation, source, nature, fruits: one and the same pure and spiritual desire after, and expectation of this heavenly felicity and glory, arising from the same title to it, foretaste of it, and fitness for it; derived from the same “Christ in them the hope of glory;” productive of similar patience, gratitude, purity, diligence, joy. — —

They are the property, the subjects, the servants of *one Lord*.—Equally his by right of creation, and pre-

servation, (John i. 3; Heb. i. 3,) and redemption. He is their one common Redeemer, who hath bought them all by one price: he is the good Shepherd, who hath laid down his one life for the sheep; not but that he would have laid down more had he possessed them, and it had been necessary; who hath shed one and the same precious blood, and poured out one soul for these transgressors. Therefore they are not their own, but his, and have given themselves equally to him. — — The subjects of one king, delivered from bondage to the same spiritual enemies, protected and governed by the same sovereign power — Fellow-soldiers in one army, under one generalissimo of the armies of the Lord of Hosts, one Captain of their salvation; though in different companies perhaps, yet armed with the same armour, and fighting for the same cause, and against the same enemies.—Servants of one Master, employed in cultivating the same field of the world, and in working in the same vineyard of the church. Although one may be employed to dig, and another to plant, and another to water, one to plough, and another to sow, &c.; yet all are one, and carrying on one general design. (1 Cor. iii. 8.) — —

They profess and possess *one faith*. The object of their faith is one, the same Divine revelation, the same Gospel, with the great, important, and essential truths of it, in which they all agree. They believe in the same Author of the Gospel, in his person, offices, and characters, in his humiliation and exaltation. in his grace and glory. The faith itself that embraces these objects is the same. — —

They are baptized with *one baptism*, viz. of water, as an emblem of regeneration; the same sign and the

same thing signified. In baptism, they were all dedicated to God, and professed to “renounce the devil and all his works, the pomps and vanity of this wicked world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh;” to “believe in all the articles of the christian faith;” and to “keep God’s holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of their life.” —

They are the creatures, the worshippers, the people, the children, of “*one God, and Father of all*, who is above all, and through all, and in all.” His creatures, his offspring, curiously formed. his rational and immortal offspring: his spiritual worshippers, not only attending the same or similar ordinances, and using the same or similar means, but in these means and ordinances worshipping him that is a Spirit “in spirit and in truth:” his people, in covenant with him: his children by adoption and regeneration, and therefore brethren and sisters to each other, and all peculiarly near and dear to God; under his peculiar care and protection; his heirs, and joint heirs with his Son. This God is “above” them “all,” superintending and governing them, although infinitely exalted: through them “all,” and they live and move and exist in him; and “in them all,” for they are “an habitation of God through the Spirit.” —

II. WHAT THIS ADVICE IMPLIES.

The “unity of the Spirit,” of which the Apostle speaks, it should be observed, is an internal unity, an unity between the spirits of men. It may subsist, therefore, between persons of different nations, educations, conditions, &c. “There is neither Jew nor Greek, Barbarian, Scythian, there is neither, bond nor

free, there is neither male nor female, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.”—It may subsist between persons of different forms of worship, nay, of different religious sentiments; it neither necessarily implies uniformity, nor, in every point, orthodoxy.—It is an unity of affection, implying,—mutual esteem; our esteem even for such as entirely agree with us in opinion or in modes of worship, must not be equal to our esteem for those that are truly pious;—mutual love, viz: desire of, and delight in, each other,— mutual sympathy, or feeling for each other as members of the same body; participating in each other’s joys and sorrows; mutual care and concern to promote each other’s welfare;—a mutual endeavour so to do.—It is an unity of intention; one and all must have the same end in view, not our own individual honour, or interest, or pleasure, or ease, but the glory of God in our own salvation, and the salvation of others.—It is an unity of resolution to prosecute that end.—It is an unity of operation, (1 Cor. iii. 9:) their work in the field, about God’s husbandry, may be different, but the end is one; whether as labourers in the vineyard, or in the harvest field, or as fishers of men, they are employed in different ways, but all to carry on one general design. — —

III. THE REASONABLENESS OF THIS ADVICE.

It is reasonable that those who are members of one body, should not hate or oppose each other, but act in unison. Inhabited, as they are by one Spirit, which can no more set them at variance with each other, than the soul which resides in the human body can set the members of it against each other. Called from similar misery to a similar state of safety and happiness, in the

same way and manner:—having one object of hope, and one hope, is it not reasonable they should be united?—Being the property of one owner, can it be supposed that the possessions, estates, &c. of one and the same proprietor should be employed against him and each other? or the members belonging to one head should act against the head? the subjects of one king, the soldiers of one army, the servants of one master, should rise one against another? If sent out into the vineyard to dig, prune, &c. or into the field to reap, shall they wound and destroy each other with those instruments wherewith they are furnished to do their master's work? Shall they drag each other into destruction with the nets wherewith they ought to draw souls out of the sea of God's wrath?—Let those who differ in points of essential doctrine disagree with each other, dispute and contend; but shall those do it, who profess and possess one faith? Let those who have a dead faith contend with those whose faith is living: but shall those who all possess the same living and saving faith, quarrel with one another?—Shall those, who have equally been dedicated to God in one and the same baptism, even the inward and spiritual grace, and are in covenant with God, be at strife with each other?—Shall the offspring, the rational, the immortal offspring, the spiritual worshippers, the people, the children of one God and Father of all, contend with each other? Let the worshippers of idols quarrel with the worshippers of Jehovah, or let formal and dead worshippers be at enmity with spiritual and lively worshippers; but shall these be at enmity with each other?—Those, that know that God is “above all,” shall they not revere his supremacy, and live in mutual love? who know that he is “through

To put off the Old, and to put on the New Man. 57

all and in them all; shall they not stand in awe of his omnipresence, omniscience, and omnipotence, and fear to grieve his Spirit which dwells in them? — — —

[The preacher should proceed to speak of the importance of the advice, and conclude with some improvement of the subject.]

CLXXXVI.

TO PUT OFF THE OLD, AND TO PUT ON THE NEW MAN.

EPHESIANS iv. 22—24.

That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

IT is generally allowed that St. Paul treats much, in all his Epistles, on salvation by grace, and guards us against self-righteousness; but does he equally guard his readers against Antinomianism? However fully he dwells on the doctrine of justification, he surely insists quite as much on sanctification. See from ver. 17. Consider,

I. THE APOSTLE'S DESCRIPTION OF HOLINESS.

It is putting off the old man, or the corrupt nature so called, which hath spread its influence throughout the whole man, the soul, (Eph. iv. 17—20,) and the body, (Rom. vi. 13 19;) and which, like a *man*, consists of

various parts;—the soul, which animates, influences, directs, commands, governs, even Satan, (Eph. ii. 2; Luke xi. 21, 22,)—and the body, with various members, closely connected, which mutually support and strengthen each other, (Rom. vi. 6; vii. 24;) the members of this body being whatever is contrary to holiness and righteousness, (Col. iii. 5—9, Eph. iv. 22,) as impotence, unbelief, distrust, pride, self-will, enmity, idolatry, discontent, malice, envy, anger, injustice, unmercifulness, cruelty, revenge. The deeds of the old man are very vigorous and strong, though old; mighty deeds, (Gal. v. 19—22, Eph. iv. 25—29;) each member acts its part: unbelief, like the heart causing the blood to circulate through the whole body, influences all the other members: pride produces contention, contumely, strife, &c.; self-will leads to murmuring, disobedience, presumption, &c. — This must be *put off*: the metaphor is borrowed from an old worn-out or unclean garment, which we would cast off with abhorrence.—We must also be “renewed in the spirit of our minds,” in the faculties of the soul, by obtaining an enlightened understanding, rectified will, pure and well-regulated affections. — — We must “put on the new man,” a new creature, so called because it influences the whole man soul and body; (text, and 1 Thess. v. 23; 1 Cor. vi. 20.) And it consists of different parts,—the soul, in which God dwells, and which he animates, influences, directs, actuates, commands, (1 Cor. vi. 19; 2 Cor. vi. 16; Eph. ii. 22; Rom. viii. 9—14;)—the body and its members, (Col. iii. 12—17; Gal. v. 22;) holiness, righteousness, viz., faith, humility, self-denial, love, meekness, gentleness, patience, &c.—The deeds of the new man, are all vigorous, strong, active.

It is “the image” of God, “created” by him, “renewed in knowledge.”—This must be put on, as a “robe of righteousness.” — —

II. THE IMPORTANCE OF TAKING THIS ADVICE OF THE APOSTLE.

If we take it not, our christianity is but a name or profession, and will only render us more guilty — We cannot glorify God, as being unlike to him, and at enmity with him.—Nor can we set a good example, and thereby edify others, for the corrupt tree will “bring forth corrupt fruit.”—We cannot be happy ourselves, for this old man is corrupt, like an old, threadbare, ragged, and dirty garment, which cannot cover us, which exposes us to shame, and is offensive, hurtful, encumbering, and entangling. All the evil dispositions of it are productive of misery. Its lusts or desires, are foolish, unreasonable, violent, insatiable, deceitful, promising but not yielding satisfaction.—We are not fitted for, and cannot enter heaven without the new man. —

III. HOW TO ATTAIN THIS HOLINESS.

It is the gift of God: he “creates” it; but not without our co-operation: he works on us as upon rational creatures, not superseding but directing and assisting us in the use of our faculties, and has appointed certain means to be used by us.—We are to “hunger and thirst after righteousness;” and in order to this, should consider frequently, nay continually, the nature and necessity of it, our want of it, the great worth of it, God’s willingness to give it, and cultivate a spirit of prayer. Exercise faith, (Acts xv. 9; 1 John v. 4; 1 Pet. v. 9; Eph. ii. 8;) in Christ, (Rom. xiii. 14; Heb. xii. 2.) We

must believe in his mediatorial undertaking, and look for grace through him: in his life, and imitate him; in his death, and die with him; in his resurrection, and rise with him, (Rom. vi. 1—8;) in his ascension, and follow him in our affections, (Col. iii. 1;) in his reign at God's right hand, that we may sit with him; in his prophetic, priestly, and kingly offices, learning of him, confiding in him, yielding ourselves to him therein.—“Walk in the Spirit,” (Gal. v. 16;) receive and “live in the Spirit,” (ibid. ver. 25;) through his assistance, striving to counteract the motions of corrupt nature, (Rom. viii. 13; Col. iii. 5;) we must encourage the motions of the Spirit, desire, expect, depend on his various influences, whether teaching, sanctifying, comforting; take his advice, follow his drawings, obey his commands.—Consider and apply the promises, (2 Pet. i. 4;) the spiritual promises, including justification, (Heb. viii. 12; Acts xiii. 38, 39; 1 John i. 9;) sanctification, (Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 26; 1 Thess. v. 23, 24;) adoption, (2 Cor. vi. 18; Gal. iii. 14, 26; iv. 5, 6;) eternal life, (Luke xii. 32; John iii. 16;) the intermediate state, (Luke xxiii. 43;) the resurrection of the body, (John vi. 44, 54; 1 Cor. xv. 42, 43;) and an eternal state of happiness and glory, (Matt. xxv. 21, 23; Rom. viii. 19; Ps. xvi. 11, and Rev. xxii. 3, 5;)—temporal promises, as things necessary, (Matt. vi. 33;) useful, (Psal. lxxxiv. 11;) direction in all difficulties, (Isai. lviii. 11; Psal. xxxii. 8;) success in all undertakings, (Psal. i. 3;) afflictions sanctified, (Isai. xxvii. 9; Zech. xiii. 9;) all things made to work for good, (Rom. viii. 28;) all wants supplied, (Phil. iv. 19;) prayer heard, (Matt. vii. 7; John xiv. 13, 14.) Now the application of these promises promotes our sanctification. The promises of justification free us

from guilty fear, and despondency; those of sanctification encourage us to oppose sin, and follow after holiness, knowing we cannot labour in vain; those of adoption promote patience, resignation, gratitude; those of eternal life, deadness to the world, hope, joy: those of hearing prayer, encouragement to pray. The temporal promises must promote dependence, freedom from anxious care, and peace of mind. All together, being great, precious, and faithful, must beget in us gratitude and love to their author, and all the fruits, and joy and hope.—Contemplate God's image, (2 Cor. iii. 18;) his glory, in the glass of his works, his word, in the humanity of Christ, that "beholding it with unveiled face," we may be "changed into his image."—Walk with him, (Acts iv. 13; Prov. xxii. 24, 25; Gen. xvii. 1;) "setting the Lord always before" us, and acting under a sense of his presence and attributes; keeping up communion with him in his ordinances, and providences; studying and endeavoring to please him in all things, (unless we do which we walk contrary to him,) making his word our rule, and his glory our end, complying with his will, concurring with his designs, being "workers together with" him, and becoming "followers of God as dear children."

CLXXXVII.

THE SIN AND FOLLY OF GRIEVING THE
HOLY SPIRIT.

EPHESIANS iv. 30.

*Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed
unto the day of redemption.*

THIS is one of the most necessary cautions, and most comprehensive and useful directions to be found in the Oracles of God. None are of more general utility, or more needful to be inculcated and regarded. For all our saving knowledge in divine things, our holiness and happiness, depend on the Spirit of God, and a proper conduct towards him. The subject therefore, is of the deepest importance, and deserves our most serious consideration. To set it in a just point of view, consider we,

I. WHAT IS HERE MEANT BY THE “HOLY SPIRIT OF GOD,” AND HOW HE SEALS US TO THE DAY OF REDEMPTION.

By “the Holy Spirit of God,” here, is meant that divine person or principle, to which every thing excellent is ascribed in scripture, or to his influence or inspiration.—All the life and motion in the universe, (Gen. i. 2;) particularly vegetable, animal, rational, and spiritual life.—Skill in arts. (Exod. xxxi. 3.)—Especially every gift, truly and durably good, and perfective of our nature, as illumination, the scriptures themselves, and the true knowledge of them, and of divine things,

(1 Cor. ii. 11—14; Eph. i. 17:) regeneration, (John iii. 5, 6.) including awakening, conviction, mourning, repentance, faith, an inward, universal, continued, and progressive change: direction, help, and succour, (Rom. viii. 14, 26.)—All our comfort and consolation, (Rom. xv. 13.)—Progressive and perfect sanctification. (Tit. iii. 5; 2 Thess. ii. 13; 1 Pet. i. 2.)—A knowledge of our title to, a preparation for, and an earnest of heaven.—For he “seals us to the day of redemption;” he marks us out for the Lord, stamps his image upon us, and preserves us to, and ensures to us, eternal and full redemption.—And yet men are wont to grieve this author of all good!

II. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN GRIEVING HIM, AND HOW THIS IS GENERALLY DONE.

Three expressions are used in scripture on this subject, which, though nearly related to each other, do not mean the same thing.—Doing “despite to the Spirit,” (Heb. x. 29; *ἐν ὀργῇ*;) treating the Holy Spirit with contumely and affront: viz. blaspheming him, as by imputing the miracles wrought by his agency to the devil, calling his ordinary operations and grace a delusion of the devil, enthusiasm, &c.; persisting to sin wilfully in spite of all his remonstrances, (Heb. x. 26.)—“Quenching the Spirit.” In allusion to fire, which is quenched or damped, by pouring water upon it, by heaping earth or ashes upon it, and whatever is not combustible; by withholding fuel from it, or by neglecting to stir it up. So may the Holy Spirit be quenched.—“Grieving the Spirit.” By behaving unkindly towards him: as we grieve a friend, when he comes to warn us of danger, and urge us to flee to a place of safety, and we will not

take warning and flee, (Gen. xix. 12—14;) when he comes to give us instruction and direction, and we refuse to receive it, as the Jews treated the prophets of old; to offer us help, and we reject the help offered, (Matt. xxiii. 37;) to invite us to partake of privileges and blessings, and we boast on trifling vanities, and disregard the invitation, (John v. 40; Luke xiv. 16.) To apply this, Our friend will be grieved and pained, not on his own account, but on ours: not merely or chiefly because we are enemies to him, but because we are enemies to ourselves: and the more he loves us, the more will he be grieved, and in the end will withdraw from us, and give us up. —

But to proceed to the persons by whom, and the manner wherein, that is generally done.— We observe, it is done by the impenitent, when called to repentance by the word; the Spirit accompanies the word, and they feel relentings, but relapse into their besetting sins, fly into company, or plunge into business:—when visited by affliction: the Spirit of God works with his providence, and they are humbled, and form resolutions: they recover, and forget them, and “their goodness is like the morning cloud.” Isai. vii. 13; lxiii. 9, 10.)—By the penitent, when invited to come to Christ and believe in him: the Spirit draws them by the word and the advice and exhortations of the saints, but, through indolence, they rest in outward reformation, or through unbelief sink into despondency, and “reject the counsel of God against themselves;” how slow are we to believe unless we see signs and wonders! — By believers. They have properly received the Spirit, and are sealed by him, as the text signifies; but often grieve him, by yielding to unbelief, and slav-

ish fears; by pride and self-confidence, by the love of the world, by care and business, by evil tempers as discontentment or anger, by indulging in vain thoughts and trifling conversation, misemploying time and other talents, as health, and money, neglecting to do good, and so doing evil. — —

III. THE SIN, FOLLY, AND MISERABLE CONSEQUENCES OF GRIEVING THE HOLY SPIRIT.

The sin of it.—It is an act of undutifulness and injustice. It may be compared with the sin of grieving a kind and faithful friend, a loving and tender father, an affectionate husband.—An act of ingratitude. The Spirit is the author of all spiritual and eternal blessings to us, as we have seen: he is God's greatest and best gift, next to the gift of his Son. The gifts of God's providence, the scriptures, and the means of grace, and even our redemption by Christ, are all lost upon us without the Spirit, who alone can enlighten, quicken, regenerate, direct, comfort, and seal us to the day of redemption. What is the greatness of the sin of grieving this author of all good to us; the Spirit; the Holy Spirit: the Holy Spirit of God! — —

The folly of it.—It may be compared with the folly of grieving a friend, whose direction and help we continually want, a father, on whom we are dependant; a husband, without whom we cannot live happy. If we grieve the Spirit, we grieve our only guide to heaven, forsaken of whom, we shall miss our way and never arrive there;—the only physician of our fallen souls, by whom being given up, we shall remain sick for ever; our only help against our enemies, being deserted of whom, we shall be overcome and destroyed;—our only

comforter in our troubles, without whom we shall certainly sink under them;—the only one that can “seal us to the day of redemption;” and not being sealed, we shall want the knowledge of our title, and our chief qualification for heaven. (Ezek. ix. 4.) — —

The miserable consequences of it.—So far as we grieve him, we remain ignorant, sinful, guilty, depraved, weak, and wretched.—Persisting to grieve him, we are doubly lost, as we should have been lost if the Spirit had not visited us at all; we are in a superadded condemnation, because when “light is come into the world, we loved darkness rather than light,” and rendered all God had done for our recovery vain: viz., the word of God, the means of grace, the death of Christ. — —

INFER,

The great goodness of God, whose Spirit is grieved, because man will resolve to sin and perish!—The amazing perverseness of man, to whom it is as natural to grieve the Spirit as to breathe! — —

Apply the whole to the impenitent, to mourners, to believers; and exhort from motives of gratitude and self-interest. — —

CLXXXVIII.

MEN ASLEEP AND DEAD IN SINS, CALLED
TO AWAKE.

EPHESIANS v. 14.

Wherefore he saith, Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.

SOME think this passage is taken from an apocryphal book ascribed to Jeremiah, which the learned and eloquent Saurin says might really contain some prophecies delivered by him, and so, by the way, be quoted by St. Matthew, (ch. xxvii. 9,) who might know that the prophecy recorded in Zech. i. 12, was originally delivered by the elder prophet: but it seems more likely, that the Apostle here refers to Isai. lx. 1; or that he means Christ has declared the substance of the words mentioned in this text, by all his apostles and other servants, as indeed is the case, this being the sum total of the Gospel. Consider,

I. THE STATE WE ARE HERE SUPPOSED TO BE IN BY NATURE.

A state of sleep.—This implies ignorance. Those that are asleep, in a great measure, lose, for the time they are in that state, their knowledge of men and things and all their ideas, so that they know not perhaps who they are, the persons and things surrounding them, their enemies, their friends, their danger or safety, their duty or happiness. In like manner, those that are spiritually asleep, know not themselves nor God. nor Christ the Mediator, nor the way of salvation, their enemies, their

friends. their danger. their duty, nor their happiness.—A state of insensibility. Their senses being locked up, they see not, hear not, feel not. &c. As they have no true sight of their situation, so of course they have no proper sense of it. They do not discern their danger, and how they may shun it. Things spiritual and eternal make no impression upon them. The presence of God, the nearness of death, the misery of dying unconverted, the terrors of judgment, the dreadfulfulness of eternal fire, and, on the other hand, the happiness of dying in the Lord, and of eternal blessedness, they are insensible of.—A state of security, carelessness, and unconcern. Not apprehensive of any danger, they have no care or wish to avoid it, and are not concerned about eternal things.—A state of indolence and sloth. A man asleep does nothing for himself or others. While in a state of spiritual sleep, we do nothing for God or our souls.—A state, in which people are frequently amused, disturbed, or at least busied in various dreams, either pleasant or painful. Thus, while spiritually asleep, we “walk in a vain shadow, and are (diverted or) disquieted in vain.”

A state of spiritual death.—These are naturally,—dead under the guilt of sin, condemned and exposed to wrath:—dead under the power and pollution of sin: viz. alienated from the life of God, having no union with him, and therefore no share in a wise, holy, and happy life; as a body, when separated from the soul, is deprived of the life of such as live in this world.—Carnally-minded, and therefore, dead to divine things, and alive to carnal things.—Dead in sin, that is, dead to righteousness, and alive to sin.—Corrupt, loathsome, and abominable before God like a dead corpse. — —

II. THE EXHORTATION GIVEN TO SUCH.

“Awake thou that sleepest,” &c.—God calls thee. by his word, the doctrines, commands, promises threatenings, exhortations of it;—by his ministers, whom he raises up, qualifies, and sends forth, chiefly for this end:—by his providence, affliction, health, adversity, prosperity, the sickness or death of friends and relations:—by his Spirit, which enlightens thy mind, awakens and informs thy conscience, inclines thy will, excites thy affections, alarms thy fears, kindles desire, encourages hope, prompts to exertion, and therefore answers thy objections arising from natural inability to awake and arise.—Awake, therefore, thou that sleepest; awake, and break off thy pleasing or distressing dreams, recollect thyself, recall thy ideas, recover thy knowledge, know thyself what thou art,—ignorant, insensible, secure, indolent, and in a state of death.—Awake to a true sense as well as sight of things; that is, of thy state, thy situation, thy danger, the only method of thy deliverance. Awake, and be concerned, deeply concerned; remember, thou hast a soul to be saved, a hell to escape, a heaven to obtain. Awake, and be active, in all the private and public means of grace; hear the word, read, meditate, pray, watch, deny thyself, and work righteousness.—Rise from the dead by repentance unto life; rise out of the mire of sin: rise into the life of God, by faith, a “faith of the operation of God,” (Col. ii. 12,) leading thee to receive, with the understanding and the heart, all that is revealed in the Gospel, particularly Christ Jesus, (John xi. 26: Col. iii. 3,) and the promises given to us in him. (2 Cor. i. 20.)

III. THE GRACIOUS PROMISE MADE TO THOSE THAT TAKE THE EXHORTATION.

“*Christ shall give thee light.*”—He himself is “the light of the world,” (John viii. 12;) “the sun of righteousness,” (Mal. iv. 2;) and he rises “upon those that fear his name,” causes “the dayspring from on high to visit” them, and give “light to them who sit in darkness.”—The light of knowledge, as to divine things, causing them clearly to know the way of salvation, their duty and privileges, and directing them in matters temporal and spiritual.—The light of holiness, this sun arising “with healing in his wings;” (Mal. iv. 2;) delivering from sin, restoring to the divine nature, imparting the whole image of God.—The light of comfort and happiness: the light of God’s countenance, his approbation, a good conscience, peace, hope, joy, the consolations of God’s Spirit, bright prospects of eternal life, blessed foretastes of it.—The light of life, the pardon of sin, the favour of God, adoption into his family, the Spirit of adoption, regeneration, implying spiritual life in the favour of, and communion with God, (Rom. viii. 10,) and a spiritual mind, and a title to, and foretaste of, eternal life. — —

CLXXXIX.

BELIEVERS ENJOINED TO WALK CIRCUMSPECTLY

EPHESIANS V. 15, 16.

See that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

I HAVE just read one of the most important injunctions that ever was or can be given to man: comprehensive, indeed, of every other precept, and of our whole duty. If we comply with it, we shall not willingly neglect any duty, nor be lukewarm in the pursuit of any thing excellent or praiseworthy! On the other hand, if we do not walk circumspectly, and redeem our time, there is no duty which we may not omit, and no vice into which we may not fall.—Hence the Apostle connects this injunction with a very comprehensive exhortation, to universal holiness and righteousness, to “walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called,” (ch. iv. 1,) and as “children of the light” and of the day, (ch. v. 8.) Nor is there any possibility of complying with his exhortation without being circumspect in our conduct, and attentive to the redemption of time. But inquire we,

I. TO WHOM THIS ADVICE IS GIVEN.

This may appear to some an unnecessary inquiry, as they may suppose that every moral precept, which concerns all mankind, all rational and accountable creatures, in a state of trial, must, of course, be addressed to all. And this I readily allow. It is the duty, the

absolute duty, of all to “walk circumspectly, redeeming the time;” and they are inexcusable if they do not. But are all men by nature in a state or condition to fulfil this duty? Are they capable of walking in the way here prescribed? Is there not some prior duty to be done? Must they not, as exhorted in the preceding verse, “awake out of sleep, and arise from the dead?” Can they “walk” before they “stand,” or stand before they live? We are to “walk by faith,” but certainly we must first “stand,” and “live, by faith.” Man by nature is *asleep*, as to divine things; yea, “*dead*,” (ver. 14, chap. ii. 1; Col. ii. 13;) being not only without a title to, or meetness for, eternal, but without spiritual life; and hence without any true or abiding inclination, knowledge, or power, to walk circumspectly, redeem time, or do any thing good.—It is necessary therefore that we should awaken and arise, and receive light from Christ.— [See former Plan.] Are you in this state? if not, the first point must be to be brought into it.— You must “awake and arise”—by a sincere repentance and faith ——. If you are in this state, the advice is given to you.

II. WHAT IT IMPLIES.

I shall now confine myself to the former part of the Apostle’s advice, viz., *walking circumspectly*. St. Paul frequently expresses the whole deportment of a christian by this term, *walking*; all his tempers, words, and works; his duty towards God, his neighbour, and himself. See chap. iv. 1, 17; v. 8; Col. i. 10; Phil. iii. 16, 17; Gal. v. 16, 25. He includes, walking in a firm belief of, and adherence to, christian doctrine, (3 John 4;) in a genuine experience of christian graces, as faith,

hope, love, (Eph. v. 2;) humility, resignation, patience, contentment, meekness, gentleness, long-suffering, &c. (ch. iv. 2, 3;) in a cheerful performance of christian duties, viz. of godliness, walking in “the ordinances and commandments of the Lord blameless.” (Luke i. 6:) of righteousness, as truth, justice, mercy, charity; of temperance, sobriety, and self-denial, and taking up the daily cross. “Walking *circumspectly*.” The word, (from the Latin *circumspicio*.) means, the looking well about us, as suspicious of danger, and guarding well against it. It implies a wakeful state of mind; a consciousness that we are in danger of missing our way, or of being hindered in it, or of being attacked, wounded, and overcome by our enemies, and brought into bondage, if not destroyed: the keeping a good look out, standing on our guard, and watching against these things.—The Greek (*πὺς ἀκριβῶς*) rather means, *how accurately* or *strictly*, viz., walking exactly, according to our rule, which is the holy and just law of God, understood in its spirituality, extent, and obligation, as explained by the doctrine of Christ, and his Apostles, and exemplified in their conduct:—not transgressing it knowingly; avoiding every thing it forbids, and doing every thing it enjoins: not deviating from it in temper, word, or work, to the right or left; aspiring after a full conformity to it in heart and life, in principle and practice; so as to be cast, as it were into the mould of it; attending to the motive, end, and spirit of our obedience; and that it be universal in all things, constant at all times, and persevering to the end of our lives.—Great grace, or a perfectly new heart is requisite for this, which must be obtained. — Hence appears,

III. THE WISDOM OF COMPLYING WITH THE ADVICE,
AND THE FOLLY OF NOT COMPLYING WITH IT.

If we “walk circumspectly, and redeem the time,” we shall be safe and secure, and make progress: we shall not miss our way, shall not loiter in it, shall not be deceived nor overcome by our spiritual enemies, shall not neglect our duty. We shall be comfortable in our minds, possessed of peace with God, and his approbation; peace of mind, and the testimony of a good conscience; a lively hope of immortality, and communion with God. Our example will be instructive and animating to all around. We shall prevent or check much evil, and shall cause or promote much good. Thus we shall promote the design on which Christ came into the world, and lived and died for us; that for which the word and spirit of God was and is given to the church, and shall bring much glory to God. Finally, we shall receive a proportional reward in eternity.— On the contrary, if we do not “walk circumspectly,” we shall be unsafe. shall miss our way, be exposed to our enemies, neglect our work; shall be unhappy, having neither peace with God nor peace of mind, nor a good conscience; shall be stumbling-blocks and hindrances in the way of others; shall obstruct the design on which Christ came into the world, and dishonour God; and finally, fall short of our reward in heaven, and sink into perdition. — —

CXC.

ON REDEEMING TIME.

SECOND PLAN, ON EPHESIANS V. 16.

Introduction from the former Sermon. — —

WE now proceed to the second particular of the Apostle's advice in these words,—“*redeeming the time, because the days are evil.*” And consider we,

I. WHAT WE ARE TO REDEEM?—TIME.

As to its nature: it differs from eternity as space differs from infinity. The two latter, eternity and infinity, belong to the Creator: the former, time and space, to the creature. God, who is from everlasting to everlasting, and no older now, speaking after the manner of men, than he was six thousand years ago, has nothing to do with time; and he who is omnipresent, has nothing to do with space. But we who, by the necessity of our nature, are limited in our being and duration, have necessarily to do with both.—As to the origin of time, it may be justly observed, as by the poet,—

“From old eternjty's mysterious orb
Was time cut off, and cast beneath the skies;
The skies, which watch him in his new abode,
Measuring his motions by revolving spheres,
That horologe machinery divine.”—

—It is measured by incessant changes in ourselves, in our souls, ideas successively passing through our minds, and in our bodies, by the periods from infancy

to childhood, to youth, manhood, declining years, and old age; and in persons and things round about us, especially by the motions and revolutions of the heavenly bodies, of day and night, the seasons.—As to the value of time, we may again adopt the sentiment of Young,—

—————“Time is eternity;
Pregnant with all eternity can give;
Pregnant with all, that makes archangels smile;
Who murders time, he crushes in the birth
A power ethereal, only not ador’d.”

Its importance appears in this. that it is dealt out by particles, and we never receive two minutes at once; we are accountable for every moment: we may every moment be receiving or doing good, and increasing our eternal reward. — —

II. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN REDEEMING TIME, AND HOW THIS MAY BE DONE.

It is a curious exposition, which Grotius, Dr. Whitby, and some others give of this, that it is to be understood of that caution which the first christians were to use in avoiding persecution, that so they might draw out time as long as they possibly could, and not provoke their enemies to cut them off. See Dan. ii. 8.) This undoubtedly was their duty, and it had been well if the zeal of some primitive christians had regarded the precept in this sense. But still it does not appear to be the Apostle's meaning. The word used by him (*ἐξαγοραζομενοι*.) alludes to the custom of merchants and traders, who buy up articles they know to be of value, and what they know they can turn to good account.—But where may

we buy up time? Where is it to be met with? In the hands of sin, wickedly and madly employed; in those of carnal amusements and pleasures; of worldly and unnecessary cares and pursuits, vainly and foolishly employed; in those of sloth and indolence unemployed; in the hands of lukewarmness and negligence, partially, or but half employed; in those of ignorance and error, erroneously and fruitlessly employed.—At what price may we buy it? To buy it out of the hands of sin, we must part with our sins, our lusts, and our passions; that is, with the knives and lancets that have wounded us, with the poisons, stings, and deaths that would have undone us. To buy it out of the hands of amusements, pleasures, worldly ambition, &c., we must renounce and abandon these things. To redeem it from sloth, we must give up our ease and self-indulgence, deny ourselves, and “take up our cross.” To redeem it from lukewarmness, and negligence, we must “watch,” “be circumspect,” “labour,” “strive” to enter into Heaven. To rescue it from ignorance and error, we must acquaint ourselves with the nature of true religion and our duty.—To redeem time also, means, to recover that which is lost.—Strictly speaking, it is impossible to recall a moment which has passed, though we could give worlds to purchase its return, but there is a sense in which lost time may be recovered as Dr. Young observes — —

“To day is yesterday return’d; return’d
Full power’d to cancel, expiate, raise, adorn,
And reinstate us on the rock of peace.
Let it not share its predecessor’s fate;
Nor, like its elder sister, die a fool.”

—The word (*καιρος*;) rendered *time*, means season, or opportunity. We must improve and take advantage of the *season of grace*, in order to obtain pardon for all past sins; renewing and assisting grace, which is continually offered to us, for the future, and which offer we should gratefully accept. (2 Cor. vi. 2.) We must make much of the *season of trial*, and make it our care to acquit ourselves well in it. We must also seize and make the most of the *season of improvement*, that we may make a constant advancement in knowledge, holiness, usefulness, and happiness. — — This leads us to remark,

III. FOR WHAT PURPOSE TIME SHOULD BE REDEEMED.

Not that we may hoard it up, as it were, as misers do their gold, which indeed we cannot do. Or, that we may spend it on ourselves in providing for our temporal support, or honour, or indulgence, “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, or the pride of life.” But that we may use it for our spiritual and eternal profit; for our instruction, conversion, renovation; and for the advancement of the glory of God, and the Redeemer; for the good of others in body and soul; and the rewards of the everlasting state. — —

IV THE REASON OF THIS ADVICE; AND THE WISDOM OF TAKING IT.

The reason here assigned is: “because the days are evil.”—They are uncertain and precarious: we are surrounded with peril and danger. Therefore let us lose no time, but improve the present moment, which is all we are sure of.—The days are fleeting and transitory, and the seasons of grace, trial, and improve-

ment will soon be past, and will return no more; and, if not improved, will be lost for ever.—The days are vain; all are vain around us; if we are not earnest, determined, and watchful, we shall be carried down the stream of general custom and practice.—The days are sinful, and if we do not redeem the time, we shall certainly be infected and immersed in the corruption of the world.—The days are full of trouble, and therefore we should save as much time out of them as possible, in which to ensure eternal happiness. — —

CXCI.

CHRISTIANS INVITED TO PARTAKE OF THE SPIRIT FREELY.

EPHESIANS v. 18.

Be filled with the Spirit.

THIS precept stands connected with several practical exhortations laid down in this and the last chapter. — — It is directly opposed to a caution given in the beginning of the verse, and the antithesis is beautiful; “Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit.” Intemperance greatly prevailed in the heathen world, and even in some of the feasts of their gods, particularly of Bacchus, wherein it was commonly esteemed not only lawful but commendable, to indulge themselves to gluttony and drunkenness. The converts at Ephesus saw this practice among their neighbours, and might formerly have been themselves addicted to it; and therefore the Apostle warns them against their old sins, and enforces the caution by put-

ting them in mind of the bad effects which used to follow intemperance. "Be not drunken with wine, wherein is excess." The word for "excess," (αἰσωτία,) signifies entire dissoluteness of mind and manners, and such a course of life as is void of counsel and prudent intention, like the behaviour of persons continually drunk. Moreover, impurities are too often the attendants of intemperance in common life. Now, in opposition to this, the Apostle exhorts christians to "be filled with the Spirit." Instead of the jollity and criminal pleasure which sensual men delight in, attended by an unrestrained indulgence of their appetites, ye christians should aim at the sacred and solid pleasure which is to be had from the influence and blessings of the Holy Spirit.—The exhortation is addressed to the professors of christianity at Ephesus, most of whom, it is to be presumed, in those early ages, when persecution raged so horribly, were christians in reality, and therefore had received the Spirit in some measure. Nevertheless, as some of them might be destitute of his sacred influences, the words may be taken in such a latitude as to excite all who name the name of Christ to aspire after the Spirit, or a larger measure thereof, either to begin or perfect "a good work in them."—Consider,

I. WHAT WE ARE TO UNDERSTAND BY "BEING FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT."

Here are two things, that require to be distinctly explained; what is "*the Spirit?*" and then what is it to "*be filled* with the Spirit?"

By the Spirit here, is meant that Divine Agent, in whose name, as well as in those of the Father and the

Son, we are baptized, often termed the Holy Spirit, the eternal Spirit, the Spirit of truth, of life, of grace, of might, of wisdom and revelation, of holiness, the Comforter, the Spirit of God, of Christ. But observe, not his extraordinary gifts, which in no age are necessary to salvation, and were chiefly bestowed in the early ages, for the good of others, are here meant; but his ordinary influences, which are necessary to salvation. See ver. 19—21.—Those fruits of the Spirit are here meant, which are “in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth;” (Eph. v. 9;) “love, joy peace. long-suffering, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.” (Gal. v. 22, 23.)

The expression, “filled with,” or, by, “the Spirit,” supposes there to be a sufficiency in the blessed Spirit, and his influences, to fill our souls, to supply all our wants, to satisfy our desires, and help our infirmities. We are in darkness, and need illumination, instruction, and direction; he is the Spirit of light, truth, wisdom. We are dead in sin, and need to be awakened, quickened, and excited; he is the Spirit of life. We are depraved, and need to be renewed and sanctified; he is the Spirit of holiness. We are in want of consolation; he is the Comforter.—It imports our partaking of his influences and fruits in a large and plentiful manner; not indeed “without measure;” in this sense Christ only had the Spirit: nor, so as to admit of no increase; thus we shall hardly have the Spirit in heaven. But, so as to have every power and faculty of the soul subject to the authority and under the influence of the Spirit; to experience the several kinds of his operations and fruits; to have his agency more stated and constant within us; to have him not as an occasional visitant and a transient

guest, but as a constant inhabitant, to abide, dwell and inhabit in us, as his house and temple; (see Isai. lvii. 15; 2 Cor. vi. 16; John xiv. 16—23; Rom. viii. 9; 1 Cor. iii. 16; Eph. ii. 22;) to have his influences rendered more mighty and operative in us, producing their proper and genuine effects; as greater light, life, power, purity, comfort, strong faith, a fully assured and confirmed hope, fervent love, an uniform meekness and patience, a full conformity to God, and close and constant communion with him; filling us with all his fulness; (Col. i. 9—11; Eph. iii. 14—21; John vii. 37;) making us taste great sweetness and delight in him, so as to aspire after full perfection. (Phil. iii. 13, 14.) —

II. WHY THIS IS MADE A MATTER OF EXHORTATION TO US?

Because of,—the desirableness of being filled with the Spirit,—the attainableness of it;—and something being incumbent on us, in order to it.—We should consider this as *a most desirable thing*. By attaining this, we shall gain the knowledge of God, of Christ, and of divine things, which is “eternal life” (John xvii. 3,) and as much exceeds all other knowledge, as knowledge itself exceeds all other things on earth. By this we are prepared for, brought to, and assured of the favour of God, the greatest and best Being in the world, which is a blessing infinite in degree and eternal in duration. By this we are conformed to God, and made to resemble him. By this we are united to, yea and possessed of God, and have fellowship with him. By this we are prepared for, and assured of, our dwelling with God for ever. And by this, we have even an earnest of our future inheritance in our hearts, and “have our conversation in heaven;” we “sit in heavenly places with Christ

Jesus," and anticipate the "life hid," and laid up and concealed for us "with Christ in God," (Col. iii. 3.)—*An attainable good*; being procured by Christ, the fruit of his death and intercession; (Ps. lxxviii. 18; Gal. iii. 13, 14; Acts ii. 33, 38; promised by the Father (Luke xxiv. 49; Acts i. 4; Joel ii. 28; Isa. lix. 20, 21; Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27; Jer. xxxi. 33; Luke xi. 13;) by the Son, (John xiv. 16, xv. 26, xvi. 7; and especially John vii. 37, 38.)—*Something is incumbent on us in order to it.* Yet nothing that we can do can in the least deserve the Spirit's influences: nor can any thing required of us in order to our being filled with the Spirit, be expected to be done by our mere natural power, but by the preventing grace of the same Spirit. We must be found in the use of the appointed means, we must apply ourselves diligently to attain christian knowledge, (Hos. iv. 6.) Since the Spirit of light and wisdom operates upon us through the word of truth, we must hear, read, and meditate on that word: we must consider, and examine ourselves by the truths we have heard and read in the scriptures: we must carefully abstain from all evident and known obstructions to his gracious influences, and whatever would grieve him, or quench his motions: we must observe and improve all seasons of his apparent visitation, follow his drawings, fall in with and yield to his motions: we must earnestly and frequently pray to God for his Spirit's influence, and an increase thereof: (Ezek. xxxvi. 37; Isai. lv. 6; Luke xi. 5—13:) we must maintain strong and habitual desires after the grace and fruits of the Spirit, and an increase thereof. (Ps. lxxxii. 10; Matt. v. 6; John vii. 37.) In dependence on his grace: we must attempt to surrender ourselves entirely to God in Christ, upon the terms of the Gos-

pel, not doubting but he will assist and accept us. (Rom. xii. 1, vi. 18; 1 Cor. vi. 20; Jer. l. 5.)

III. THE OBLIGATIONS WHICH LIE UPON US, AS CHRISTIANS, TO AIM AT BEING FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT.

The clear revelation we have concerning his agency, beyond all which was given in former ages of the church, lays us under strong obligations to desire to be filled with his influences.—The dignity of his person should make us ambitious of such a guest, when he is willing to dwell with us. He is no less than the Spirit of God, as our soul is the spirit of man. (1 Cor. ii. 11.) His relation to Christ obliges us. (Rom. viii. 9; Gal. iv. 6. —Our relation to Christ will be most clearly proved and manifested by his Spirit dwelling with us. (Rom. viii. 9; 1 Cor. xii. 12, 13.)—Thus we shall be vessels of honour, sanctified and made meet for the Master's use. So, "an entrance shall be ministered unto us abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." (2 Pet. i. 11.)

CXCII.

THE GOOD WORK OF GOD IN THE SOUL.

PHILIPPIANS i. 6.

He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.

THE steadfast and consistent profession, which was made by the Philippian christians, "from the first day" of their conversion, until the time he now wrote to them, a period of about twelve years, without ever being

turned aside, or dishonouring their holy calling, afforded St. Paul the most heartfelt satisfaction, and a confident expectation, that God would carry on the work he had so favourably begun in them, till it should attain perfection, and issue, at the second coming of Christ, in their everlasting glory. —

Inquire we,

I. WHAT IS THIS WORK?

It is wrought in us; not only in the church of Christ in general, but in each individual member of it in particular; in the mind and heart, (Heb. xiii. 21; 2 Thess. i. 11.) Thus it is distinguished from the works of God wrought for us, as those of creation, providence, redemption, justification.—This work wrought in us is performed in every faculty or power of our inward man. It is a work of illumination in the understanding, gradual and increasing; of conviction and awakening in the conscience; of quickening and animating the affections; producing humiliation, shame, sorrow for, and hatred to, sin; esteem, desire, hope, joy, in regard to holiness and the divine author of it;—of conversion, implying the subjection of the will; the mortification, restraint, and due regulation, of the appetites and passions; change in all the dispositions. It is a work, producing divine graces in us, as repentance, spoken of 2 Cor. vii. 10, 11: faith, John vi. 29; 1 Thess. i. 3; 2 Thess. i. 11; Col. ii. 12: hope, 1 Pet. i. 3: love, to God and man, Rom. v. 5; 1 Thess. iii. 12: humility, resignation, patience, contentment, meekness, gentleness, long-suffering, and purity of intention and affection, and universal holiness, or a renewal after the divine image, (2 Cor. iv. 16; Tit. iii. 5.)—In general, this work

is wounding and healing; killing and making alive; pulling down and building up; breaking up the ground and sowing; stripping and clothing. (Acts xiii. 41.) —

II. HOW DOES IT APPEAR THAT THIS IS A GOOD WORK?

It is painful in its commencement; for a discovery of our sinfulness and guilt, conviction of sin, humiliation, shame, grief for it, are not pleasing to nature; but though not joyous, like affliction at first, it afterwards yields most pleasant fruit; producing, even on earth, peace, hope, joy, love, and other happy affections, (Psal. cxxvi. 5.)—It is good, as to its author, God, from whom nothing but good can proceed.—It is good as it respects his motive for working it, love to us.—It is good as to the means and agents, by whom it is effected in us, Christ, the Spirit, the word. (1 Thess. ii. 13.) The end is good, even eternal salvation. — —

III. WHAT ARE THE PROOFS THAT THIS WORK IS BEGUN?

Many of these are mentioned by the Apostle in the context.—“Fellowship in, (or through) the Gospel, till now:” (ver. 5;) a participation with others in the blessings of it. manifested in their hearing, reading, meditating, understanding, and receiving the word, and not departing from it, like the way-side and stony-ground hearers; also, uniting in fellowship with the people of God.—Believing in Christ, (ver. 29.) The work of faith being in a measure wrought in them, and of consequence the new birth, (John i. 12; 1 John v. 1,) love, (1 John iv. 7,) victory over the world, (1 John v. 4, 5; ii. 15,) purity. (Acts xv. 9.)—Suffering willingly for the Gospel, like the Apostle, and thus being “partakers of his

grace," (ver. 7, 29,) not forsaking him in his bonds, and when he stood up in defence of the Gospel, but sharing in the reproach and persecution he endured; the faith and patience they thus exercised, proving the reality of their grace.—Rejoicing in Christ. (ver. 26.)—"Shining as lights in the world" by their unblamable and useful life. (Chap. ii. 15) — —

IV. ST. PAUL'S CONFIDENCE THAT GOD WOULD CARRY ON HIS WORK IN THEM.

If God had not been willing to carry it on, he would not have begun it.—It is true, God works by means; but they were willing to use, and did actually use, and resolved to continue to use, the means.—Their perseverance, however, was not infallible. See ch. ii. 12, 13; Gal. v. 4. — —

APPLICATION.

To sinners. Is this good work begun?—You answer, "I do so and so."—But what hath God done? hath he wrought in you to will and to do? Is it a good work, to rail, to lie, to cheat, &c.; to be proud, self-willed, discontented, envious, &c.?—*To mourners.* "He will not break the bruised reed." (Matt. xii. 20.) He hath wrought in you repentance, he will work faith: he hath convinced, he will convert; he hath wounded, he will heal; (Hos. vi. 1;) he hath brought down, and given sorrow, he will exalt and cause joy.—*To believers.* The work is but begun: the foundation is laid, that the superstructure may be raised; the tree is planted, that it may bear fruit; the child of God is born of his Spirit, that he may grow up from a babe to a young man and a father; the labourer is hired into the vineyard, that he may work. — —

CXCIII.

THE FRUITS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS ITS ONLY SURE EVIDENCE AND GREATEST REWARD.

PHILIPPIANS i. 11.

Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God.

SUCH is the concluding half sentence of that wise, important, and instructive prayer which the Apostle addressed to God for the believers at Philippi, with their bishops, or overseers, who watched over their souls, and fed them with "the sincere milk of the word," and their *deacons*, or *stewards*, who attended to the temporal affairs of the church, and made distribution to the poor. All these he describes as having "fellowship in the Gospel," or partaking in its light and grace, its privileges and advantages, "from the first day" that they heard it, until the time when he wrote. He speaks of "a good work," as being begun in them; a work of repentance and faith, of conviction and conversion, of regeneration and sanctification. He also expresses his confidence that this work would be carried on and completed; he does not say, because he knew that God had unconditionally elected them, and that, being once in grace, they must of necessity be always in grace, and could not finally fall: had he known this to be the case, he could not have exhorted them, as he does afterwards, to "work out their own salvation with fear and trembling," (ch. ii. 12, 13;) to "stand fast in the Lord" (ch. iv. 1;) to "stand fast in one spirit with one mind striving together for the faith of the Gospel;" (ch. i. 27;) to "be blameless and

harmless, the sons of God without rebuke," and "hold forth the word of life," that he might "rejoice in the day of Christ." (Ch. ii. 15, 16.) But the reason he gives is, "Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as in my bonds and in the defence and confirmation of the Gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace," &c. (ch. i. 7, 8.)—Now for these, who had already manifested such love to him and the other ministers, who had preached the word to them, and to the Gospel itself for God's sake, he "prays that their love might abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that they might be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; being filled," &c. (ver. 9—11.)—Consider we,

I. WHAT WE ARE TO UNDERSTAND BY "THE FRUITS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS."

Two things must be distinctly considered under this head, *righteousness*, and the *fruits of righteousness*.—As it is not heathen morality, but christian righteousness, that is here intended, it must be observed, that it is founded not on heathen but christian principles.—When I speak of heathen principles, I do not mean principles of atheism on the one hand, or those of polytheism and idolatry, on the other. I mean such truths, as are evident, or may be known by the light of nature, without a supernatural revelation; (Rom. i. 19, 20;) as the being and attributes of God, the grand outlines of piety and profaneness, of virtue and vice, with the doctrine of a future state of rewards and punishments. Through these principles a man may learn to "fear God," and in many respects "work righteousness," as Socrates, Cornelius, and many others have done. But

this is not christian righteousness. Christianity acknowledges these principles, but it reveals many others, and lays a foundation for a more true, substantial, and exalted righteousness. It informs us,—of the fall of man, and our total depravity, our sinfulness, guilt and weakness, and thus lays a foundation for conviction of sin, humiliation, contrition, and the whole of repentance. It informs us of redemption, and unfolds its nature, and lays a foundation for faith and confidence. It discovers the true character of God, as a God of love, infinitely lovely, and loving to us, and thus opens a source for returns of love. It manifests the person, offices, love, sufferings, resurrection, and ascension, of the Redeemer, and so shows the obligations we are under, and the regards due to him. It manifests the spirituality, extent, and obligation of God's law, whence we learn the insufficiency of our own righteousness on the one hand, and the nature of true holiness on the other. It confirms to us, on the surest grounds, the doctrine of a future state, shows the nature of that state, and the unspeakably great and eternal rewards and punishments to be assigned in the day of judgment, and thus furnishes a most powerful motive to holiness and all good works. (1 Cor. xv. 58; Gal. vi. 9.) —

This righteousness has its source not in nature, but in grace. Our mere natural powers of understanding, will, and affections, can neither know, nor esteem, nor practise it. It flows from grace; (Rom. v. 21;) enlightening grace gives us to know it, quickening grace to love it, renewing grace to experience it, and strengthening grace to practise it.—This righteousness is not legal, or of the law, but evangelical, or of faith. (Phil. ii. 8, 9.) Legal righteousness is one, wrought out by

our own strength, in obedience to an outward law, whether moral or ceremonial: it does not acknowledge or consider past guilt, present depravity, or future weakness: it therefore neither implies pardon, nor regeneration, nor supernatural aid. But evangelical righteousness is the reverse of legal, and includes all these. It reveals "the Lord our righteousness," and it implies the imputation of righteousness in our justification, the implantation of it in our sanctification, and grace to assist in every duty to God, to our neighbour, and ourselves.—It is not speculative or notional, but experimental and practical. It does not imply merely that we have just, clear, and full views of all these things, but that we experience and enjoy them in our hearts, and that we evidence them in our lives, in all the branches of piety and virtue.

In all these branches, it is not formal and merely external, but internal and spiritual; worshipping him, who is a Spirit, "in spirit and in truth" in his ordinances; looking for inward grace in the use of outward means, and attending to the motives and ends of all our words and works, and to the spirit in which we speak and act. It is not partial, but universal, and that both with respect to graces and virtues, aspiring after every grace, and following every duty.—It is not occasional and inconstant, but constant and uniform.—Hence it is not barren, but fruitful. It produces the fruits of righteousness. For those possessed of this righteousness are represented in the scripture, as "trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord;" and, what is worthy of remark, they are represented as being such, in consequence of having those things done for them and in them, included in evangelical righteousness. See Isai.

lxi. 1—3. Now “trees of righteousness,” naturally bring forth fruits of righteousness. Observe, the fruit is from the tree, and not the tree from the fruit. (It is true, the fruit contains a seed, from which a new tree may be produced. Thus trees of righteousness produce by their conversation and example other trees.) And the quality of the tree is evidenced by the fruit; not by the leaves of a fair but empty profession; nor merely by the blossoms of good desires, intentions, resolutions; but by real fruit, fruit for refreshment and pleasure, as well as for support and nourishment: fruits of happiness as well as holiness. *e. g.*—Peace (Isai. xxxii. 17) with God, in mind, with all men;—hope of eternal life, which is only then well grounded and lively, when it proceeds from this evangelical righteousness; justification, sanctification, and practical obedience:—joy arising from this hope, from remission of sins, the favour of God, adoption, the testimony of a good conscience, communion with God, all which are refreshing and pleasant fruits;—gratitude, (1 Pet. i. 3; Ps. cxvi. 12;) love to God, implying esteem, desire, delight in him, being in its effects, humble, resigned, patient, contented, zealous, obedient;—love to the people of God, affectionate, sympathizing towards them, delighting in them, (Rom. xii. 10, 15,) communicating to them, (Rom. xii. 13; Gal. vi. 10; Heb. xiii. 16; 1 John iii. 14—19;)—love to all mankind, rendering us true, just, merciful, meek, gentle, long-suffering, kind, bountiful, doing good to their bodies, and especially to their souls; instructing children by Sunday and other schools; sending to them, and supporting among them the ministry of the Gospel, and using all means to bring them to the true knowledge and experience and practice of it; this

is the best work of all, as it is laying a foundation for every other. — —

II. HOW THESE FRUITS ARE “BY, (OR THROUGH,) JESUS CHRIST, TO THE GLORY AND PRAISE OF GOD.”

They are so,—through his doctrine, which shows the nature, excellency, and utility of these fruits, how they may be performed aright, the punishment that will follow the neglect of them, and the unspeakable and eternal rewards which await those that do them.—Through his merits, which remove our burden of guilt, condemnation, and wrath, under which, while labouring, we have no heart to bring forth these fruits. His merits, justifying us, open a source of gratitude and love, the most powerful motive to obedience, and procure for us that grace, which produces both the will and power.—Through the Spirit of Jesus, the sap and virtue of the trees of righteousness, the fatness of the good olive.—By this, we have union with Christ, the true vine, and therefore can and will bear fruit. (John xv. 4, 5; Hos. xiv. 5, 8.)—Through the example of Jesus Christ, whose whole life was an uninterrupted course of fruitfulness and well-doing; who for this employed every faculty and member, his whole strength, his whole time, preached all his discourses, performed all his miracles, endured all his sufferings; who for this was incarnated, lived and died, renounced all worldly ease, honour, and pleasure, gave up his liberty, life on earth, “gave his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair,” &c.

In other words, through Jesus Christ as our *wisdom*, enlightening us, giving discernment, judgment, prudence, and making us “wise unto salvation:” as our

righteousness, justifying us, imparting confidence, peace, liberty of mind: as our *sanctification*, removing the power of sin, and all those lusts and passions, those earthly, sensual, and wicked dispositions, which are the principal hinderances to good works: as our *redemption*, effecting our complete deliverance from all the consequences of the fall, and procuring for us immense and eternal rewards.—As it is in and through Jesus Christ that these fruits are produced, so it is in and through him that they are to the glory and praise of God. It is allowed that they glorify God, and are to his praise, — but this they could not do, but through Jesus. They could not even be accepted of God unless they were performed through his teaching and grace, and be rendered acceptable through his sacrifice and intercession. — —

III. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN “BEING FILLED” WITH THEM, AND THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING SO FILLED

It is implied,—that as trees of righteousness, we bring these fruits forth in a larger and abundant measure, not here and there a berry in the uppermost boughs, but that our branches should be loaded with them.—That all our powers should be occupied in producing them; our understanding, memory, conscience, will, affections; our eyes, ears, tongue, hands, and feet be exercised and employed, according to their original intent, with this view, and that our talents, such as knowledge, authority, property, and influence, and finally that our grace be put forth and exerted at all times for this purpose. It may imply, that bringing forth these fruits will be so far from exhausting and emptying us of our ability and inclination to be useful,

that we shall thus be capacitated for still greater fruitfulness and usefulness. (John xv. 2; Matt. xiii. 12.)

As to the great importance of bringing forth and being filled with these fruits, we may observe,—as they are the natural result of righteousness, the natural fruit of the good tree, so they are the true, the proper, the sure, and only sure evidence of the goodness of the tree, the sure, and only sure signs of true righteousness. (Matt. vii. 20; John xv. 8.)—They are much to the glory of God. That he commands and requires them of his people, shows forth, above all other things in this lower world, his true nature and attributes; the true tendency of his Gospel, of the doctrines, precepts, and promises of it, of true and genuine christianity.—(John xv. 8.)—To his praise. For when these fruits are brought forth, through the preaching of his Gospel, and the spreading of christianity, by means of those that hear the Gospel and profess christianity, this convinces infidels, establishes and edifies believers, diffuses happiness among mankind, and causes millions to believe in, to love and serve, to speak well of, and praise God. “These things are profitable to men;” to ourselves even in matters temporal, as they lead to prudence, foresight, caution, frugality, industry, diligence, and insure the divine blessing; especially in matters spiritual, implying or drawing after them holiness and happiness: to others in soul and body, greatly lessening the evils of life, introducing numberless blessings, producing peace and good will in families, villages, towns, cities, and countries.—The immense rewards that will follow hereafter, in proportion to our holiness, usefulness, and sufferings patiently endured. As these effects are produced, and these consequences ensue on the fruits of

righteousness, in proportion as they are produced, the more we are "filled" with them, the more happy will be the effects and consequences in time and in eternity. —

CXCIV.

CHRISTIANS ARE TO POSSESS THE MIND OF CHRIST.

PHILIPPIANS ii. 5.

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.

NEVER was an exhortation given by any inspired writer, whether Prophet or Apostle, in the Old Testament or in the New, more important than this. And yet never was one given, perhaps, which has been so generally disregarded, and that both by preachers and hearers, by pastors and their flocks. Those who speak in the name of God, are frequently setting the Lord Jesus forth as a teacher, of whom men ought to learn; as a mediator, on whose sacrifice and intercession they ought to depend for reconciliation with God; as a Saviour, to whom they ought to apply for salvation; as a king and governor to whom it is their duty and interest to be subject: and as a judge, to meet whom at his bar they should make preparation. But when do they set him forth, as an example, whom we are indispensably required to imitate? Or if they also exhibit him in this character, is it not generally only as to outward things? When do they also insist on the necessity that men should have in them the dispositions and affections which were in him? Or, as it is here expressed, "the mind" that was in him? And if they do, alas! to how

little purpose do they do it? How few of their hearers regard their doctrine? or see and feel the necessity of complying with it? At least, how few do actually comply with it, or improve by it? How few do indeed imbibe the very spirit of Christ, and are disposed and minded as he was, when upon earth? And yet without this, what is christianity but a name? and what the most towering profession of it, but hypocrisy or delusion!—This is then a most important subject, and one, to which I think it my duty to call your attention.

But we must inquire,—

I. WHAT IS THE MIND WHICH WAS IN CHRIST? AND HOW WAS IT MANIFESTED?

By “the mind of Christ” when spoken of in scripture, we are sometimes to understand the judgment, counsel, or will of Christ. (1 Cor. ii. 11—16.) And this is probably the first leading meaning of the somewhat singular expression used here in the original. (ταυτο φρονεισθω εν υμιν) *Let this be judged, understood, or considered by you.* This is the first point, that we view things, and judge of them, especially divine things, as Jesus Christ did: in other words, that we receive “the truth, as it is in him.” We must judge of the things which God hath revealed to us, as infallibly true, and infinitely momentous, and must labour to understand, believe, and lay them to heart. We must entertain, as far as may be, those views of ourselves, of God, of Christ, of the way of salvation, of our duty, of our privileges, of sin and righteousness, of happiness in God, and the world, of our bodies and souls, earth and heaven, time and eternity, which Jesus Christ discovered and manifested. — —

We must understand the expression, further, as having a reference to our will, and affections, to our choice, intention, determination, disposition, as well as judgment. This is the meaning of the word (*φρονημα*) in Rom. viii. 5, 6; (see also Col. iii. 2.) We must esteem, relish, desire, and delight in, things spiritual and heavenly. As the mind of Christ is intelligent and wise, so it is spiritual and heavenly. Our affections must be set, not on sin, the greatest evil, but on righteousness, the greatest good: not on the world, which is empty and unsatisfactory, but on God; not on what would gratify the body, but on what will improve, purify, and save the soul. — —

It refers also to our whole spirit and temper. The following verses show what the mind of Christ was. (Ver. 6. 9.) Hence it appears that the mind of Christ was—a humble mind. He could not think meanly of himself: he could not but know that he was God and man, the Messiah, the Holy One of God, the Prince of Life, &c. But he did not retain, but voluntarily divested himself of “the form of God;” and, as man, was content to be despised, rejected, persecuted, afflicted, and put to an ignominious and painful death.—A loving mind towards God and man. Love to God was the first spring and source of all he parted with, died, and suffered. (John xiv. 31.)—Love to mankind, even to the evil and unthankful, was the second source. (Gal. ii. 20; 2 Cor. v. 14, 15.)—A zealous and fervent mind: he was not lukewarm and indifferent about the great things, the glory of God, and the salvation of mankind, but infinitely concerned about them. Hence his incarnation, life, death, and all the sacrifices which he made.—A disinterested and self-denying mind. He

neither sought riches, honour, nor pleasure, nor any selfish end, but the glory of God and the good of men, for which he denied himself all the conveniences of life, food and rest, with every thing most esteemed on earth, and came "not to do his own will, but the will of him who sent" him.—An obedient mind; being "obedient unto death." (Heb. x. 5—9.)—A resigned and patient mind, (Isai. liii. 7; Matt. xxvi. 36—42)—A meek and gentle mind. (1 Pet. ii. 23.)—A long suffering and forgiving mind; the persons for whom he did and sustained so much, having been sinners, enemies, rebels.—A pitiful, compassionate, and sympathising mind.—A liberal and bountiful mind; having given his Deity to be incarnated, his glory, his riches, his power, his felicity in his pre-existent state, and his very humanity to become poor, despised, persecuted, among men; his senses, his members, his body, his life, his soul, to be an offering for sin. He kept back nothing, parted with all, did all, suffered all.—We must show,

II. HOW IN ALL THESE RESPECTS IT IS REASONABLE, AND EXPEDIENT, AND NECESSARY, WE SHOULD HAVE THE SAME MIND IN US.

[The preceding particulars should be repeated and applied in this view.]—We should be influenced: by the express command of God:—the example which Christ has set us, for this very purpose:—gratitude:—a concern for the credit of his Gospel and Christ's cause, which will be hereby greatly honoured and recommended:—a view to the glory of God:—love to mankind, and a view to their salvation, present and eternal.—There are several motives mentioned in the preceding verses. (Ver. 1—4.)—He who hath highly exalted

Christ, will also exalt, in and through him, all who live and die possessed of the mind that was in him, and give the proper evidences of it. — —

III. HOW WE MAY ATTAIN THIS MIND.

By considering attentively, and exercising faith in his word, and the blessed truths of it.—By reading about, and reflecting on, his example, and setting it before us, for our imitation.—By disregarding and turning our attention from, and guarding against the influence of contrary habit, custom, or the example of others, who deviate from that of Christ.—By prayer for and receiving the Holy Ghost.—By renewing our desires and resolutions daily, to be real and perfect christians.—By watching against all hinderances.—By embracing and endeavouring to improve all helps, and especially every occasion afforded us, of exercising that portion of the mind of Christ which we already possess. — —

CXCV.

CHRISTIANS REJOICE IN CHRIST JESUS.

PHILIPPIANS iii. 3.

We are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

IN the preceding verse the Apostle cautions the Philippians against certain Judaizing teachers, who had crept in amongst them, and perverted the simplicity of Christ's Gospel. "Beware," says he, "of dogs," i. e., of cruel, rapacious, men, who, though they fawn and

flatter, pretend much love and zeal for your welfare, will tear you in pieces, and devour you like dogs. "Beware of evil workers," of those false Apostles, who, under the colour of promoting the Gospel, secretly do mischief among you, not serving Christ, but their own bellies; "deceitful workers," as he elsewhere calls them, who, notwithstanding their apparent zeal for the ceremonies of the law, in reality undermine all true religion. "Beware," adds he, "of the concision." So the Apostle terms those zealots for Judaism, by way of reproach, and with allusion to the rite of circumcision, for which they contended so strenuously. The word (*κατατομή*) *concision*, is used by the LXX. (Lev. xix. 28,) to denote certain profane incisions, practised among the heathen, and there condemned by the Lord. And the Apostle, by using the same word here, intimates that circumcision, being now abolished, was of no more account before God, and no more a seal of the covenant, than that heathenish ceremony; and that those who placed reliance upon it for salvation, were not more approved of him than the heathen. Perhaps also, he gives them that appellation, because they rent and divided the church, and by their conduct cut themselves off from having any share in its privileges. "For," adds the Apostle, whatever they may pretend to the contrary, "we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."

Circumcision was first introduced in the days of Abraham, and enjoined to be practised by him and all his posterity. "God gave Abraham," says the Apostle, "the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of faith." It was appointed as "a sign" of dis-

attending the worship and ordinances of God. He adds, "an Hebrew of the Hebrews," an Hebrew both by the father and mother's side, and that, it seems from generation to generation; so that he had every possible privilege of birth. But let us now see what were his acquired advantages. "As touching the law, a Pharisee." Of all the Jewish sects, the Pharisees were the most considerable, for numbers, learning, and a show of piety. To this sect St. Paul, then called *Saul*, belonged. He was "a Pharisee, and the son of a Pharisee," brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, a famous doctor of the law, by whom he was instructed, as in other branches of literature, so especially in the law of Moses, and the various rites and ceremonies of the Israelitish worship and economy. His religious opinions, therefore, with respect to Judaism at least, were doubtless right; and so was his practice. For "after the straitest sect of his religion he lived a Pharisee;" being as exemplary and irreproachable as the best of them; and "touching the righteousness of the law, he was blameless." No one could justly accuse him, as wanting that righteousness which was required by the letter of the law, and the exposition of it then generally received. He does not mean that he was blameless in the sight of God, and free from any violation of the law, considered in its due spirituality, and extent; but in the sight of men, and in things that came under their observation. Nor did he acquire his great reputation for piety and virtue, without some reason; for from his childhood, he informs us, that he lived in all good conscience towards God, acting according to the best light he had received. Now it is necessarily implied in this, that the Apostle duly attended all the ordinances of

divine appointment, whether of a public or private nature;—that he was not chargeable with any open transgressions of the moral law;—and that he performed many good works. With regard to this last particular, I may observe, that as the law of Moses required the Jews to contribute according to their ability to the relief of their indigent brethren, and, as the Pharisees were wont to set apart at least the tenth of their income for charitable uses, there is no reason to think St. Paul had been deficient herein; that he neglected to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick, and supply the wants of his fellow creatures, as far as he was able. If he had, he could, with no propriety, have ascribed to himself the character above referred to, that “touching the righteousness of the law, he was blameless.”

Any considerate person will observe, that the Apostle, in this account of his Jewish state, has already left many christians, so called, far behind him. Not to insist upon his privileges of birth, which were peculiar to the descendants of Abraham, and the advantages he had by education, how very few professing christians possess his regularity of conduct, and, like him, endeavour to “live in all good conscience before God!” Few there are who, as they name the name of Christ, make it their care to depart from even outward iniquity: and according to their baptismal vow, so far renounce the devil and his works as to be temperate and chaste in their persons, just and true in all their dealings! Some such, indeed, there are; but even of these, how few make a conscience of attending the means of grace at all opportunities! And how much fewer still are “careful to maintain good works!” So plain it is, that Paul’s Judaism exceeded their christianity, and that they have

not even the form, much less, the power of godliness.

But we have reason to be thankful, that there are many who go thus far; who are not only free from outward sins, but patterns of piety and virtue, whose conduct is not only in appearance blameless, but exemplary, who have ability to do good, and do, in some measure, according to their ability, being more or less useful to the bodies and souls of men. Many of these, however are manifestly wanting in earnestness. They are not lively, fervent, zealous, in the service of God; but, on the contrary, formal, cold and dead. The languor and lukewarmness which intermix themselves with all their religious duties and exercises of charity, too plainly discover that religion has no hold on their hearts, whatever influence it seems to have upon their lives. Now in this particular, St. Paul outstrips these also. For this was not his case, even while he was yet a Jew. Even then he was earnest and zealous in his endeavours to serve and glorify God. Before he knew any thing of Christ, he knew things spiritual and eternal to be of the greatest moment, and perceived the folly and inconsistency of lukewarmness in the pursuit of religion, being persuaded, if religion was worth any thing, it was worth every thing; and if there was any reality in it, of which he was well assured, it deserved, as it required, the utmost exertion of all his powers and abilities.

His zeal indeed was misguided, for it led him to persecute the christians, (ver. 6.) But this he "did ignorantly in unbelief." He did not know that Jesus of Nazareth was the promised Messiah, and that his followers were the servants and people of God. On the

contrary, he supposed him to be an impostor, and all who adhered to him and his doctrine, to be heretics, unfit to live. Hence he opposed them with all his might, at all times, and in all places, and laboured every possible way to stop the progress of a religion which he thought had a tendency to overthrow Judaism. And hereby he believed he was "doing God service." In this, therefore, as in other things, he acted from a conscientious principle, and, therefore, as he himself informs us, (1 Tim. i. 14,) he "obtained mercy;" God viewing his mistaken zeal, was pleased to make known to him "the truth as it is in Jesus," whom he so ignorantly persecuted. For had he knowingly, and maliciously opposed what he believed to be of God, he would have involved himself, it seems, in the general guilt of the Jewish teachers, and have been deemed a "blasphemer against the Holy Ghost." And for such "there is forgiveness, neither in this world, nor in the world to come."

Such was Paul's character while yet a Jew, a character in many respects so excellent, that most christians, so called, if they possessed it, would think themselves in the direct road to heaven. Nay, many, who are conscious they can lay no claim to the one half of it, yet make no doubt at all of getting there. But let not such be too confident; let them endeavour to divest their minds of prejudice, and attend with candour and impartiality to the explicit confession made by this man of God, and to the farther account he gives of himself. "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ." What things I made a gain of, or by which I acquired reputation, dignity, or wealth; what things I valued myself upon, or was led to depend

upon, as though they would gain for me the favour of God, and eternal life; "those I counted loss for Christ;" things worthy to be foregone, rejected, or lost for his sake. "Yea, doubtless," says he, (ver. 8,) without any hesitation, "I count all things but loss," not only the things above mentioned, but every thing else; all that the generality of mankind account great and good, all that they admire, desire, and pursue from day to day, all these I despise and renounce, "for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord;" for that knowledge of Christ, which not only exceeds all other knowledge, but every thing else; in comparison of which I esteem every thing else as the small dust of the balance, and lighter than vanity.

And lest we should imagine that the Apostle spoke thus for want of experience, because he had not tried, and did not know the value of the things he seemed to despise, having nothing to lose, and therefore being no proper judge in this case, he adds, "For whom I have suffered the loss of all things." It seems, he had already parted with much for Christ's sake, and did not at all repent of it. He did not think he had made a bad exchange, in having "forsaken all that he had, to become Christ's disciple!" After a long acquaintance with Christ, as in time past with the world; after having had sufficient time for trying both the one and the other, and examining narrowly their real worth, he hesitates not to give the preference to Christ. The *preference*, did I say? Nay, "I do count them but *dung*," says he, "that I may win Christ." The word means the dregs of liquors, the dross of metals, offals cast to dogs, or refuse of any thing. In such a light did the Apostle consider all things when compared with Christ. He could

not only part with them without reluctance for Christ's sake, but, if they were put in competition with Him, he would, as it were, trample them under his feet, or cast them away with abhorrence and disdain. And all this that he "might win Christ," be united to him, and made a partaker of his salvation; that he "might be found in him, not having his own righteousness, which is of the law," which was the result of his former obedience to the letter of the law, "but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."

It is now easy to infer, from all this, what it is to "have no confidence in the flesh." It is to have no trust, or dependence, on any privileges of birth, or advantages of education, on our belonging to God's visible church, or attending his ordinances, or our unblameable life, or deeds of charity; or, in short, on any thing we have done, or ever can do, for justification before God, and a title to everlasting life. It is to have no dependence on our own wisdom or strength, for direction or help in the way of duty, for protection or aid against our spiritual enemies, for support under trials, or the recovery of the divine image to our souls.—It is to "put no confidence in," and to have no inordinate affection for, any creature, as though it could make us happy, or yield us real and lasting comfort independent of God. To seek our happiness in any thing the world can afford, or to depend on any thing we are, have, or can do, for reconciliation with God and eternal life, is, in the Apostle's sense, to "have confidence in the flesh."

But if true christians do not confide in any of these things, in what do they confide? What is the foundation of their hope, and the source of their comfort?

This is a question of the deepest importance to every child of man, and such as every awakened sinner will be anxious to have resolved without delay. Those who are conscious they have grievously sinned against God, forfeited his favour, incurred his displeasure, and, because of their depraved nature, are unfit for communion with him, and are exposed to the vengeance of eternal fire; those who are further sensible they have no ability to rescue themselves from the misery they feel and fear, and who therefore have no confidence in their righteousness or strength? those who find they have in vain sought satisfaction from the pursuits or pleasures of the world. and are at length convinced that all on earth is but vanity and vexation of spirit;—those, I say, will have but little rest till they find a sure foundation whereon to build their confidence and hope. And it is chiefly with a view to the direction and comfort of these that I proceed to show.

II. HOW TRUE CHRISTIANS “REJOICE IN CHRIST JESUS.”

The word (*καυχασθαι*,) here translated “to rejoice,” implies also another, though kindred idea, viz., “to glory”*. And as the foundation of them both, it must here, as in some other places, signify to *trust* or *depend*. Consider we, therefore, how true christians *trust*, and *rejoice*, and *glory* in Christ Jesus.

The Holy Spirit having taken and shown unto them the things of Jesus, they have beheld him by faith as the “only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth,” as “made of God unto them wisdom, righteous-

* Consult, in the original, 1 Cor. i. 29; iii. 21; Gal. vi. 13, 14.

ness, sanctification, and redemption.”—They consider him as the great Prophet of the Lord, “the faithful and true Witness,” possessed of “all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,” who hath undertaken to teach them all useful and necessary truth; and hence they trust in him to be instructed in the whole will of God, as far as it concerns them to know it, and to be made “wise unto salvation.” And they do not trust in vain; for though “once darkness,” they are hereby made “light in the Lord,” and “in his light they see light.”—They regard him as the High Priest of their profession, who hath made complete satisfaction for their sins, and obtained for them free justification through his merits; and hence they trust in him for pardon and acceptance with God. And hereby they receive the “knowledge of salvation by the remission of sins,” and the “Spirit of adoption, whereby they cry, Abba, Father.”—He is discovered to them also as the Author of spiritual life to his people; as filled with the Spirit of holiness, that he may communicate of it to his members; as the root whence the branches must derive sap to enable them to bear fruit to the glory of God and the good of mankind. Hence they trust in him for holiness, and it is done unto them according to their faith; being “in Christ” they are “new creatures, old things are passed away, behold all things are become new.”—Again, persuaded that he was “tempted in all points as they are, though without sin,” that he might be “able to succour those who are tempted;” and hearing his comfortable promises.—“Fear not I am thy God. I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee, yea, I will uphold thee by the right hand of my righteousness:”—they trust in him for strength to withstand

temptation, and to fulfil the will of God. And he does not deceive their confidence, but makes his "grace sufficient" for them; so that when they "pass through the waters he is with them, and through the rivers, they do not overflow them; when they walk through the fire they are not burnt, neither do the flames kindle upon them." His strength is "made perfect in their weakness;" and while "without him they can do nothing," they "can do all things through Christ strengthening them." In fine; they see that Christ is the "Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last," who has promised "to give to him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely;" from whose throne and that of the Father flow those "rivers of pleasure which make glad the city of God." Hence they trust in him for that happiness which they can find no where else. And their hope does not, and will not, "make them ashamed." For they are already "filled with peace and joy in believing;" have received the "earnest of their future inheritance" in their hearts, and shall by and by know, to their everlasting consolation, that "eternal life is the gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

And now, is it any wonder if they rejoice in him? Surely not. It is reasonable to think they must rejoice, for they have above all others, cause so to do. No child of man has so much reason to rejoice as the real christian, who trusts "in Christ Jesus, and has no confidence in the flesh." Indeed, properly speaking, he *only* has reason to rejoice. His joy alone is rational, pure, solid, and durable. The joy that grows in the garden of nature is but a frail and short-lived flower, soon blasted by the wind of temptation, nipt by the frost of adversity, or cut down by the scythe of death. It is

true, it puts on a splendid appearance, and promises to continue; but is soon found to owe its gaudy colours and lively hue, to the soil of health, which is speedily exhausted, the beams of affluence often intercepted with clouds, and the showers of prosperity always uncertain. The joy that flows from worldly success or human favour is like a land-flood, which is soon dried up, and communicates no fertility to the soil over which it passes. But not so the christian's joy. Its source is a clear and perennial spring, sending forth its wholesome and refreshing streams in sickness as in health, in infirmity and pain as in ease and vigour, in adversity as in prosperity, diffusing happiness around, and spreading verdure and fertility far and near.

They rejoice, but it is "in Christ Jesus;" he is the source of their happiness. They may, indeed, by the kindness of Providence, possess many temporal blessings, and these may add to their joy, but they are not the chief causes of it. As falling rains serve to swell a river, which, notwithstanding, does not owe its existence to them, but flows in all weathers from its own source, not exhausted by drought, nor stopped by frost; so the christian's temporal advantages may, through the divine blessing, enlarge his comfort and increase his joy, but are not the spring of his happiness. They are like the scaffolding of a building, and may serve an excellent purpose in helping forward the work, but are nevertheless so unconnected with the fabric, that they may be removed without endangering it at all. For when all temporal blessings are withdrawn, when life itself, the foundation of them, is taken away, the joy of the true christian stands securely upon a

firmer basis; not destroyed by the waste of time, nor shaken by the assaults of adversity.

That basis is the Lord Jesus Christ, to whom christians are closely united, and nearly related. He is become their friend, their brother, their husband and in him they possess wisdom and knowledge, grace and glory. Through him they have received pardon of sin, and peace with God, adoption into the family of heaven, and a title to the "inheritance of the saints in light." They are delivered from the fear of death and hell, and blessed with a hope full of immortality. "Sin hath not dominion over them;" they are more than conquerors over every enemy, and rejoice in the glorious liberty of the sons of God. "The Sun of Righteousness hath arisen" upon them "with healing in his wings," dispelled their doubts, banished their fears, cheered their disconsolate souls, and given them "the spirit of love, and of power, and of a sound mind." And now he clears their way through all difficulties, inspires them with courage amidst all dangers, frees them from the burden of care, and lifts their heads above the billows of trouble and distress. "In his light they see light," through his love they are safe and happy and "because he lives, they shall live also." In short, through him they receive the Comforter, who fills them with strong consolation and is within them an earnest of their future inheritance in their hearts.

One thing more I have to offer upon this head. It has been observed, that the original word, (*καυχασθαι*), signifies to glory, as well as to *trust* and *rejoice*. And with how much propriety this is applied to Christ Jesus, as the object of the christian's glorying, will be easily discerned by those who have attentively considered

what has been already advanced. True christians do not glory in any privileges of birth or education: any abilities, natural or acquired; any possessions left by inheritance, or attained by industry; any titles or preferments, the rewards of their own merit, or that of their ancestors. These they know are vain and unsatisfying goods, inconstant, and of short duration; distinctions which death and eternity will soon level. They dare not therefore esteem or place any dependence upon them; they dare not value themselves because they possess them. But they obey, without reluctance, the voice of inspiration: "Let not the wise glory in his wisdom, the mighty in his might, nor the rich in his riches; but let him that glorieth glory in the Lord." In him, and in him alone, they glory, and thus imitate the excellent example of the Apostle, the language of whose heart and life was, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

In Christ Jesus they do and will glory, for they have good reason so to do. They trust in him for body and soul, for this world and the next, for all they want in time and in eternity; and they neither are, nor ever shall be, confounded. They rejoice in him, and their joy is satisfactory and durable; and shall they not glory in him? Not glory in him, who is the Author of all their mercies, the foundation of all their hopes, and the source of all their comforts? In him, in whom they "live, and move, and have their being;" by whose presence they are supported, by whose bounty they are enriched, at whose table they are fed, in whom they have wisdom, righteousness and strength, sanctification

and redemption, grace and glory; to whom God is their friend, the angels their guardians, and heaven their inheritance? Shall they not glory in him? O yes: let them glory in the Lord's Christ; let them exult and triumph in the Author of their faith and salvation; let them cry out and shout for "the Holy One of Israel in the midst of them;" for "Christ in them the hope" and fruition "of glory!" Let their hearts, their lips, and their lives ever say,

"Jesu! my all in all thou art,
My rest in toil, my ease in pain;
The medicine of my broken heart,
In war my peace, in loss my gain;
My smile beneath the tyrant's frown,
My joy, my glory, and my crown!"

INFERENCES.

May we not infer, from what has been said, that none of us can justly conclude upon the safety of our state; because of any privileges or endowments, natural or acquired, which we may possess; of any regularity of conduct or propriety of behaviour; or of any usefulness we have been of to others. It is indeed well, my brethren, if you have been baptized in your infancy, and taken into God's visible church; if you have had the advantage of a religious and learned education; if you have been preserved free "from the pollutions that are in the world through lust;" if you have devoutly attended the ordinances of God, and laboured for the temporal and spiritual good of your fellow-creatures. But you can by no means justly infer from this, that you are a child of God, and in the right way to heaven. St. Paul, you see, far exceeded the best of you in these respects, and once thought himself on that account

highly in the divine favour; but no sooner were his eyes opened by the grace of God, than he had a very different opinion of himself, and “what things were gain to him, those he counted loss for Christ.”—And herein he must be your pattern. You too must see the excellency of Christ, and your absolute need of him, for justification, holiness, and heaven. You too must know and confess your original depravity and actual transgressions, your entire sinfulness, deep guilt, and utter helplessness. You must be convinced, that “all your righteousness,” (of whatever kind,) is but “as filthy rags.” Indeed, when fairly examined, have not your best services been stained with sin and imperfection? Have you prayed with so much fervour, heard with so much faith, and received the memorials of your Saviour’s death with such humble gratitude, as ought to have animated you? Have you always been charitable without ostentation, devout without hypocrisy, and blameless in conversation without pride? I fear not. I fear your own conscience bears you witness in the Holy Ghost (if it is not still seared,) that in all these respects you have been greatly deficient: perhaps grossly guilty. In all your acts of apparent devotion, or of supposed charity, you have been only adding sin to sin, unless you have acted from a proper principle and to a proper end; unless the love of God has been your prevailing motive, and the glory of God your constant aim. And I am well assured you cannot love God, till you know “he hath first loved” you; which you cannot know but in consequence of a lively faith in Christ, and the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. But if, not having believed on Christ with a “faith of the operation of God,” and not truly converted, you still build on

the sandy foundation of your own works, which you reasonably judge to be good: you imitate the Jews of old, who, being “ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, did not submit themselves to the righteousness of God.” You “have zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.” O! that I could persuade you to follow the example of the Apostle, once in the same situation with you! that I could convince you that you have as much need of Christ as he had!—My dear fellow-mortals! Have you not sinned and come short of the glory of God? Are you not involved in the curse of his holy law, which you have violated a thousand times? Have you not therefore contracted a debt of guilt you cannot pay, and exposed yourself to the vengeance of eternal fire? Surely you have, if you had only once offended, “for he that offends but in one point, is guilty of all:” how much more when your transgressions have been multiplied as the stars in heaven, and aggravated to the deepest dye! How much more, when your whole life has been but one scene of sin, one continued opposition to the will of that God, who commands us to love him with all our heart, and our neighbour as ourselves! Surely, this considered, you have cause to own yourselves, with the Apostle, “*the chief* of sinners,” and to cry out with the publican, “God be merciful to us.” O trust not, I entreat you, I conjure you, on any thing you *are*, or *have*, or *can do*. Alas! what *are you*, but rebels against the Majesty of Heaven, who have forfeited all your comforts, with your lives themselves, into the hands of divine justice, and only have them continued to you in mere mercy? What *have you*, therefore, you can call your own, but sin, and wrath, and misery? And what

can you do, but add to the already infinite number of your offences, increase your already intolerable burden of guilt, and augment your immense debt of punishment? I beseech you, therefore, acknowledge your real condition with a humble and contrite heart: disclaim and renounce all confidence in your own wisdom, righteousness, or strength; and, despairing of help from any other source, “look to Jesus, and be ye saved!”—He is the only physician of souls; apply to him, and your diseases shall be healed: he is the only sacrifice for sin; trust in him, and your guilt shall be pardoned: he is the rock of ages; build on him, and your building shall never be moved! In Christ alone all your wants may be supplied, your sins forgiven, your souls restored, your distresses relieved. Fly elsewhere, and ruin overtakes you: fly to him, and you shall be secure even from the fear of evil. Be persuaded of his sufficiency, trust yourself to his care, depend on it, you “shall never be confounded.”

A second inference I would draw from what has been said is, that none of us, whatever our former character has been, have cause to despair of salvation. Supposing privileges of birth, or advantages of education, a regular or exemplary conduct, were requisite to recommend us to the divine favour, or to procure for us a title to God’s kingdom, you who can boast none of these things, might have had reason for discouragement and despair. But since this is not the case; since those who possess them, cannot with safety rest on them, but are obliged to relinquish them, that they may be saved by the merits of Christ alone; since there is but one way of salvation, and all may be saved in that way; why should the most abandoned of you be discouraged from repen-

tance, and hardened in sin, from a supposition that there is no mercy or salvation for you? As I would exhort such as have walked in the commandments of God blameless from their youth, to renounce (at the peril of their souls,) all dependance on their performances, and to believe on Christ, "that they may be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law," by which "no flesh living shall be justified;" so would I address to you the very same exhortation: only as you have no pretence at all for trusting to any righteousness of your own, I think it unnecessary to spend time in dissuading you from it; but I hasten to point you to "the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world." Though you have been a vile, open, notorious sinner; though you have lived a prayerless, profligate, and mischievous life; though you have boldly and impiously persevered for years in the perpetration of crimes of the deepest dye, and even "gloried in your shame:" yet I do not pass sentence of damnation upon you; I do not assign you your "portion in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone;" I do not tell you, it is impossible you should be saved. No; I dare not, because the Lord does not say so in his word. On the contrary, he says, "I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth; wherefore turn yourselves and live ye." "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."—Would you know the cause of this, how these things can be? Hear St. Paul: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance," (of thine, poor sinner, among the rest,) "that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."—Hear St. John: "God so

loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life;" for "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved." Here sinner, is a foundation whereon thou mayest build thy hope, a source from whence thou mayest derive comfort. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved;" thou shalt "be justified from all things, from which thou couldst not be justified by the law of Moses," even supposing thou hadst been obedient to it.

"But if while thou seekest to be justified by Christ, thou thyself art found a sinner," still continuing in sin, "is Christ therefore the minister of sin?" O, no! thou dost but deceive thyself; thou art not justified by him, as thou supposest; "For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor;" I show myself to be a mere fool. Why dost thou believe on Christ, but that thy sins may be destroyed? To sin again as before, is to undo all that thou hast done, or to build again what thou hast destroyed. Know then, the faith recommended supposes a deep conviction of thy sinfulness, guilt and helplessness, a heartfelt sorrow for sin, and hatred to it, together with a fixed purpose and constant endeavour to forsake it: it implies, a persuasion of the ability and willingness of Christ to save, even *thee*; an entire dependance upon him, for salvation, and a firm confidence that so depending, thou wilt never be confounded. This faith will ever be attended with victory over all sin; love to God, and a ready obedience and cheerful resignation to his will. The Apostle describes this faith and its fruits in the verses immediately following the passage I have already quo-

ted. (Gal. ii. 19, 20.) Such is the faith that must save thy soul; not a notion about Christ and salvation in thy head, but a living principle in thy heart, working by love, uniting thee to God, and drawing the Holy Ghost into thy soul, enabling thee to forsake all sin, and to "glorify God in thy body and spirit, which are his." This faith is the gift of God, and he will bestow it upon thee, if thou askest it of him, in earnest, constant, persevering prayer. Then thou shalt know that "thy sins, which are many, are forgiven," thou shalt be no longer "in bondage through fear of death," but blessed with an hope full of immortality; yea thou shalt be "filled with peace and joy in believing," thou shalt "rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of thy salvation."

This leads me to make a third inference from the foregoing discourse, which is, that they are miserably mistaken who think religion a melancholy thing; and they are "blinded by the god of this world" who are deterred from it on that account. It appears, my brethren, from what has been advanced, that it is a part of the christian's character to "rejoice in Christ Jesus." Whatever he is not, he is, at least, a happy man. He has already a pure, solid, lasting felicity, which poverty, infirmity, sickness, old age, and death, cannot destroy, cannot shake. He has an happiness, independent of earth, and which will therefore subsist when earth is reduced to ashes; subsist amidst the ravages of time and the wreck of nature.—This he has in possession, but infinitely more in prospect. In prospect, he has "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and which fadeth not away;" "fulness of joy" in God's presence, and "at his right hand pleasures for evermore;" a glory such as "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath

entered into the heart of man." His happiness is great now, yet he can imagine an happiness much greater; he believes, and is assured, his future happiness shall infinitely exceed his most enlarged conceptions: and O! what ineffable consolation and transporting rapture must this thought afford.

"O ye blest scenes of permanent delight,
Full above measure, lasting beyond bound!
A perpetuity of bliss, is bliss!"

Such is the bliss of a real christian; *great, increasing, infinite, eternal!* Such my brethren, is your bliss, if you deserve that best of characters.—Judge ye, then, whether you are christians in reality; does your religion make you truly happy? Does it calm the tumult of your passions, subdue the reluctance of your will, enlighten the darkness of your mind? Does it restrain the inordinancy of desire, appease the vexation of fear, relieve you of the burden of care, and enlarge your soul in glorious hope? Does it give you peace in confusion, contentment in adversity, and joy in affliction and pain? In one word, does it afford you satisfaction? if not, you have great reason to think, you have not yet trusted in Christ aright, are not yet interested in him. —

But is it not high time that you should? Can you be happy, can you be safe, till you are *found in him*? O no; reason, scripture, experience, agree to inform you, you cannot. Though you "join house to house, and lay field to field, till you are placed alone in the midst of the earth;" though you heap gold as the dust, and advance daily from one step of preferment and eminence to another; though you court pleasure and amusement in their fairest forms, and richest attire, and clasp them in your embraces day by day; yet *rejoice* you cannot;

but must lay your account to meet with disgust, dissatisfaction, and distress, till you are found in Christ Jesus. Why, then, will you delay to turn your back upon the world, and bid it an everlasting farewell? Why will you not return to him from whom you have so deeply revolted? Why will you hesitate a moment to adopt the language of an eminent saint:—

“Keep far away, for ever far from hence
 Ye gaudy shows, and flatt’ring snares of sense;
 No more your blandishments my heart detain,
 Beauty and pleasure make their court in vain;
 Objects divine, and infinite in view,
 Seize all my pow’rs, ye fading toys, from you.”

Thus give your heart to the Lord: trust in him, glory in him, rejoice in him. “Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice!” “Let your moderation,” (with respect to earthly joys,) “be manifest to all men: the Lord is at hand.” He will speedily dismiss you from this stage of service, release you from the prison of infirmity and pain, or move for ever all the obstructions and hinderances of your joy, and fill your ravished soul with an infinity of bliss, which shall know no period.

CXCVI.

CHRISTIANS EXHORTED TO PRESS FORWARD IN EXPERIMENTAL RELIGION.

PHILIPPIANS iii. 15.

Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded.

IT is sufficiently obvious to any attentive reader, that the word *perfect* is by no means always to be understood in the same sense in the Oracles of God.

In most places of the Old Testament where it occurs, it seems to mean much the same with the word *sincere*, or *upright*. I know not what else we can make of it where it is applied, (as is frequently the case,) to persons whose character is far from being unexceptionable. Thus of Noah it is said, that he was “a just man and perfect;” and of Job, that he was “perfect and upright;” and yet they were neither of them without particular blemishes. Yet they “feared God and eschewed evil,” (as it is added concerning Job, perhaps with a view to explain in what sense he was perfect,) and therefore are styled *perfect* men, notwithstanding some manifest failings.

In some places of the New Testament, it is, I think, to be taken in a sense not very different from this, as 1 Cor. ii. 6, where the Apostle, referring to the simplicity of the Gospel of Christ, which was deemed foolishness by the learned Greeks, says, “We speak wisdom among them that are perfect;” that is, among those who receive the Gospel, and walk worthy of it; among real christians who are advanced to some maturity in grace and experience. And also Matt. xix. 21, where, to the young man, who, supposing himself to be no way deficient, asked, with seeming pride, “What lack I yet?” our Lord replied, “If thou wilt be perfect, sell that thou hast, and give to the poor: *i. e.* If thou wilt prove thyself sincere in thy obedience, and be truly religious, if thou wilt enter into life, and be perfectly happy after death, so do.—Another instance, where the word is to be taken in this general sense, we have in our text; for whosoever considers these words in connexion with what goes before, will, I think, readily allow, that by “as many of us as be perfect,” the Apostle means as

many as are really christians, in a state of salvation, and in the way to heaven. That this is his meaning, appears also from the third verse of this chapter, where the Apostle professedly describes his own character and that of others, whom he here styles "perfect," in such terms, as suit every true christian; saying, "We are the circumcision," (or the true people of God,) "who worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." Taking it for granted that this is the Apostle's meaning, I shall endeavour briefly to describe the character of a christian, a thorough christian, who walks worthy of the Gospel, is a child of God, and an heir of heaven; and then to show you how such ought to "be minded." In illustration of these points, the paragraph from whence I take my text, will afford matter sufficient. And first, in respect to

THE CHARACTER OF A CHRISTIAN.

Being naturally blinded by the god of this world, we are all prone to think highly of ourselves, to suppose we are possessed of wisdom, righteousness, and strength. So St. Paul once thought, and was therefore full of self-confidence and pride, depending fully on his own merits and abilities for salvation. But no sooner was his mind enlightened by the grace of God, than he became sensible of the folly of his former confidence, and the eternal loss he would have sustained, if he had not utterly renounced it. He saw and felt the insufficiency of his own righteousness to recommend him to God, and of his own wisdom and strength to enable him to understand or perform God's holy will. Hence he received, as it were, "the sentence of death

in himself, that he should not trust in himself;" and in this he is imitated by every christian. They too are convinced that "all their righteousness are as filthy rags," that they are "not sufficient of themselves to think any thing as of themselves," much less to perform a perfect obedience to the law of God. They confess themselves to be guilty, corrupt, condemned; who, for any thing they have done, or can do, must, without the interposition of divine mercy, perish everlastingly.

They do not, however, despair of receiving mercy, being persuaded that though "they have destroyed themselves, in God is their help." They are enlightened with the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord; they are made acquainted with his incarnation, life, and death; with what he hath done and suffered for the salvation of a lost world; in consequence whereof he is become their Prophet, Priest, and King. They believe he is able, in the exercise of these offices, to pardon their aggravated guilt, instruct their great ignorance, and invest their polluted souls with that complete holiness, "without which they cannot see the Lord." They know him to be "mighty to save," and as willing as mighty. Of this they can have no doubt. when they consider the amazing proofs he hath given of his love to them, in those unparalleled sufferings he hath undergone for their sakes. Hence they trust in him for present and eternal salvation; and however guilty and helpless in themselves, are "justified by the faith of Christ," and "can do all things through Christ strengthening them."

Thus they are interested in him. They have "*won* Christ," as the Apostle speaks. They can appropriate

him and his benefits to themselves. They can adopt the language of the spouse in the Canticles, "My Beloved is mine, and I am his;" and of Thomas, "My Lord and my God!" He hath betrothed them to himself in loving-kindness, in faithfulness, and in truth: they are married to him; whence they have a right to call him theirs, with all that he is and has. His person is theirs, in all the perfection of the divine and human nature, to be contemplated, possessed, and enjoyed by them in time and in eternity. His blood is theirs, to cleanse them from the guilt of all sin, and his righteousness to clothe their naked souls, that they may not be ashamed to appear before the Majesty of divine holiness and justice. His grace is theirs, and it is on all occasions sufficient for them, to purify them "from all pollution of flesh and spirit," and enable them "to perfect holiness in the fear of God;" to give them victory over their spiritual enemies, and strengthen them to do and suffer the whole will of God. He is "the resurrection and the life;" and because he lives they shall live also; for his joy is their joy, and "the glory which the Father hath given him, he hath given them."

The glory of the Mediator chiefly consists in his union with the Father, and his consequent enjoyment of him. Now this glory Christ hath given to his disciples, "that they may be one, as he and the Father are one," intimately united to each other and to Christ, according to the following words, "I in them, and thou in me." Accordingly, St. Paul desired to win Christ, that he might "be found in him;" viz., in union with him. (Ver. 9.) This then is another part of a christian's character; he is united to Christ, which all are who have obtained an interest in him. As soon as ever we be-

lieve on Christ, and thereby lay claim to a part in his merits and grace, he “dwells in our hearts by that faith.” As soon as ever we “live by faith in the Son of God,” he “lives in us,” communicating to us “out of his fulness and grace for grace.” For he grants the privilege of “becoming sons of God,” to those “who believe on his name;” and “because they are sons, he sends the Spirit of his Son into their hearts, crying, Abba, Father;” and “hereby they know they are of God, by the Spirit which he hath given them.”

By the indwelling of this Spirit, they are united to him, not only as a woman is united to her husband to whom she belongs, on whom she depends, whom she loves and obeys, and in whom she takes complacency and delight; but they are united to him as a branch is united to a tree, to which it adheres, by which it lives and grows, and from which it derives all its verdure, strength, and fertility. Thus they “cleave to Christ with full purpose of heart;” by him they live a life of holiness and happiness, and from him they derive that grace which makes them pleasing to God and useful to man. By abiding in him, they are enabled to bring forth much fruit, and “hereby is their heavenly Father glorified.” They are united to him as a member of the human body is to the head from which it receives its nourishment, strength, and vigour; by which it is influenced, directed, and actuated; and separate from which it has no life, no power. Thus they, deriving nourishment from his grace, “grow up into him in all things, which is the head,”—till they become “perfect men” in him, and arrive at “the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”

In consequence of this, with the Apostle they become

dead to the world and sin. "Yea, doubtless," he says, "I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ;" "by whom," he says, in another place, "I am crucified to the world, and the world unto me." Such is the experience of all true christians: for "he that is born of God overcometh the world." The acquaintance they have with the riches, and power, and glory of the Redeemer, has made them look down with contempt upon all the boasted riches, and power, and glory of this transitory world. They have drunk of the water which Christ has to give, and therefore thirst not for creature delights, but the water which he has given them "is in them a well of water springing up to everlasting life." They have tasted the satisfactory, pure, and lasting pleasures of religion, and have therefore lost their relish for the pleasures of sense, which are, at best, vain, corrupt and inconstant.

And though they do not expect justification on the score of their own righteousness, let it not be inferred from thence that they are without righteousness. Far from it. They have a righteousness far superior to, and very different from, the righteousness they had previous to their union with Christ. Thus the Apostle, "that I may be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law," which arises from my obedience to the moral and ceremonial law, and is performed in my own strength; but "that which is through the faith of Christ;" (την εκ Θεου δικαιοσύνην) that righteousness which is from God, (επι πιστει) in consequence of faith. Such is the righteousness all have who are united to Christ Jesus; a righteousness derived from

God, in consequence of faith: and what that is, it is not difficult to determine.—That believers are interested in the righteousness of Christ, (I mean his active and passive obedience,) is too manifest, from the whole tenor of Scripture, to admit of any contradiction. But it does not seem to me that the Apostle has that chiefly, if at all, in his view here. He rather, I think, means that personal righteousness which never fails to follow true faith in Christ, and is wrought in us by the operation of the Holy Ghost, received from God. This righteousness is both inward and outward, and implies every holy temper, word, and work, but especially the love of God and of our neighbour, with all the blessed fruits proceeding from it.

No sooner is a sinner justified by faith in Christ, than “the love of God is shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost given to him.” He esteems God as infinitely worthy of his best affections and service, and all-sufficient for his present and eternal happiness. He desires him as his only portion, his chief good, and delights in him. From this love of God springs the love of his neighbour, yea, of all mankind, disposing him earnestly to desire their welfare in body and soul, to esteem and commend their excellencies, to excuse and conceal their faults and infirmities, to rejoice in their happiness, and grieve in their afflictions. Hence will proceed a cheerful obedience to all God’s commandments, and a patient resignation to his holy will, a fixed abhorrence of whatever would injure our neighbour, and a sincere endeavour to be useful to him. Thus are all true christians righteous before God, “walking in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord blameless.” And yet, after all, they will say, with the Apos-

tle, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ," on whom they rely, independent of any thing wrought in them, or done by them, for their acceptance with God, both here and hereafter.

I have now given you the principal outlines of a christian's character, but cannot enlarge without detaining you too long from what I chiefly intend in this discourse, viz., to show you

HOW ALL REAL CHRISTIANS OUGHT TO "BE MINDED."

In this matter the Apostle proposes himself for our imitation. For after giving an account of his own conduct and experience, he adds, in the words of our text, "Let as many of us as be perfect be thus minded." We are therefore to be like-minded with the Apostle, and how he was minded we learn from the verse immediately preceding: "I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Here is a manifest allusion to a foot-race, being one of the ancient Grecian games. Almost all the terms here made use of in the Greek, are such as were generally used in respect of those games, as those we translate "prize," "mark," "press forward." This being remembered, may assist our conceptions on this subject. To those who ran in the races, a prize was proposed, generally a crown of withering leaves, or boughs of olive, bay, or laurel. For this they were invited to run by an herald, who also proclaimed the rules they were to observe on their course. Alluding to this, the Apostle speaks of "the prize of our high calling of God in Christ Jesus." The prize proposed to those who run the christian race is the infinite and eternal glory and

felicity of heaven, "an incorruptible crown," which will not wither and decay, like leaves and flowers, but ever flourish in verdure and beauty. For this crown we are invited to run by God himself; we are "called of God in Christ Jesus." He, in his word, holds out this prize, proclaims the laws which we are to observe, and the terms upon which we shall be acknowledged victors, and urges us "so to run that we may obtain." Now of those who ran in the exercises of Greece, only one received the prize, viz., the person who reached the goal first. But in the christian race, all who run may receive the heavenly prize, provided only they arrive at the mark spoken of in our text. This is implied in the Apostle's words, "I press toward the mark," says he, "for the prize;" *i. e.*, in order to my obtaining the prize. It is of great importance therefore to understand what this *mark* is at which the Apostle aimed, and at which we must aim, if we would not run uncertainly, and spend our strength and labour in vain. Concerning this it appears to me, St. Paul informs us, ver. 10. After telling us what was his present experience, in the words which I have already explained and applied to every true christian, he adds, "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death." The phraseology, especially in the Greek, (τοῦ γινῶναι αὐτόν, &c.,) seems to express the Apostle's desire of a blessing not yet fully enjoyed; which appears yet more manifest, from ver. 11, where he intimates that his end in desiring these things was, that he "might attain to the resurrection of the dead," *i. e.*, an happy resurrection, in order to his possessing the glory of heaven. Consider we therefore briefly what may be

the purport of these words, and how far the aim of the Apostle should be the mark of every christian.

It appears, from what has been observed above, that the Apostle did already know Christ to a great degree, and yet he says; "that I may know him." He wanted to know him more, which he was very sensible he might do. Well did he remember our Lord's promise to those who already knew him so as to love him and keep his commandments, mentioned John xiv. 21, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." The full accomplishment of this glorious promise the Apostle had in view. that he might be more thoroughly enlightened by that Spirit which "takes of the things of Jesus and shews them unto us," and so made to know "him, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge." He longed to penetrate yet more into the "great mystery of godliness," how "God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." He wished to know, as much as he possibly could, what Christ is in himself, what he is to his people, and what he hath done, and is still doing, for them. But especially he wanted to "comprehend, with all saints, what was the height and depth, and length and breadth, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that he might be filled with all the fulness of God." Hereby he knew his union and fellowship with the Lord, in which consisted all his joy and glory, would be most increased and perfected; Christ would take up his abode with him, and allow him a holy, intimate, and

continued fellowship with himself. And therefore, after all he had known of him, he still “determined to know nothing but Christ, and him crucified,” and “counted all things but loss for the excellency of this knowledge.”

Another particular, nearly related to the preceding, which this Apostle had in view was, to “know the power of his resurrection.” Perhaps the original words, (*δυναμιν ἀναστάσεως*,) might be better rendered, *the efficacy of his resurrection*; and the Apostle may mean to express his desire of partaking of the effects of it, or the benefits flowing therefrom. Now, not to mention that Christ was “raised for our justification,” a blessing the Apostle had long enjoyed, I would now observe, his resurrection was in order to his ascension, and this in order to his receiving “gifts for men, that the Lord God might dwell among them.” In other words, he rose, that being “by the right hand of God exalted, he might receive of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost,” and “shed it forth upon his followers.” And this St. Paul seems chiefly to have in view here. He had indeed, in a true sense, already received the Holy Ghost in his miraculous operations and sanctifying graces, whence he was in a great degree, holy in himself, and useful to others. Yet he knew he might be more deeply, extensively, and constantly influenced by him, as a Spirit of truth, holiness, and comfort. He knew he might be “full of faith and the Holy Ghost,” might “abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost;” and hence his love also would “abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment,” until he was finally perfected in holiness. Thus he would be “wholly sanctified” in “spirit, soul, and bo-

dy," and stand "complete in all the will of God," being "holy and without blame before God in love." Thus, as he was "planted together in the likeness of his death, he would be also of his resurrection," being fully raised up from "a death of sin to a life of righteousness," and made to "sit in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." And thus, lastly, being "risen with Christ," setting "his affections on things above," and living more perfectly than he yet did, a "life hid with Christ in God," "when Christ, his life, should appear, he would appear with him in" more resplendent "glory," shining as a star of the first magnitude.

But besides his own personal holiness, another happy consequence of his being more abundantly filled with the Spirit, would be his greater usefulness to others, which no doubt the Apostle also had in view in his desire to know the power of Christ's resurrection. For Christ being raised from the dead, was "exalted to the right hand of the Majesty on high," as a "Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." These gifts the Apostle wished to see given to all to whom he preached the Gospel. He longed to see Christ's kingdom, the foundation of which was laid in his resurrection, come with power, through his instrumentality. He knew, his Lord had "sat down at the right hand of God, from henceforth expecting till his enemies should be made his footstool;" because in consequence of his voluntary humiliation unto death, and complete victory over all adverse power, "God had given him a name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." This event was not yet arrived; the Apostle

did not yet see all things put under his Lord and Saviour; but he expected it: he looked and longed for the time when Christ should "put down all rule, and all authority, and all power;" "that when all things should be subdued unto him, the Son himself might be subject unto Him that did put all things under him, that God might be all in all." Thus would the efficacy of his resurrection be generally manifested, to the confusion of his enemies and the joy of his friends and followers. In order to this glorious event, a dispensation of the Gospel had been committed to the Apostle, and he longed to be faithful to his trust, "fully to preach the word of God," and make known "among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;" that, in this sense, he might "not run in vain, nor labour in vain." Therefore, knowing his sufficiency was of God, he wished that Christ would display the power of his resurrection, would discover he was "risen indeed." by "granting him with all boldness to speak the word, by stretching out his hand to heal, that signs and wonders might be done in his name."

In the mean time, while he thus desired, as it were, to reign with Christ, and to follow his exalted Saviour in usefulness and victory, he was aware that he must also follow him in labours and sufferings, must "drink of the cup which he drank of, and be baptized with the baptism which he was baptized with." This was accordingly the object of his pursuit, as appears from the next particular; "That I may know the fellowship of his sufferings." These words, it is true, may bear a somewhat different sense: they may be considered as expressive of the Apostle's desire to sympathize with Christ in his sufferings. And, doubtless, he desired to

weep with his weeping Lord, to know how much he had endured, and to be suitably affected therewith. But still, I think, he is rather to be understood as desiring actually to suffer with him, and for his sake. He remembered what had been signified to Ananias concerning him—"I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake." He knew a certain portion of afflictions and temptations, was allotted him; that he had a baptism of suffering to pass through; and "he was straitened till it was accomplished." Though "the Holy Ghost witnessed in every city, saying, that bonds and afflictions awaited him, yet none of these things moved him; neither did he count his life dear unto himself, so that he might finish his course with joy, and the ministry he had received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God." "What mean ye," said he to the disciples, who would fain have persuaded him, as once Peter would his Master, to spare himself, "what mean ye, to weep and break my heart? I am ready, not to be bound only, but to die at Jerusalem for the sake of the Lord Jesus."

Blessed Paul! how great is thy magnanimity! How far exceeding that of the most most renowned heroes of the world! How far superior art thou to the most applauded joys, and most dreaded evils of this life! With what contempt dost thou look down on the most desirable of earthly enjoyments, even life itself, when the preservation of it would allure thee from the path of duty! How prodigal art thou of it in his service, to whom thou hast long dedicated thy soul and body, being only concerned that he might be magnified by thee, whether by life or death! Yes, it was his earnest desire, and fixed resolution, not to stop or linger in his glorious

career of labours and sufferings, for the honour of his Master, till he was "made conformable to his death."

For thus I would understand the last particular included in the mark, at which the Apostle aimed. It seems as if it had been signified to him "by what death he should glorify God;" that he should not die in the course of nature, or by the violence of any disease, but by the fury of his persecuting enemies, and in attestation of the truth, as Christ had done. His Lord had not only suffered as a sacrifice for sin, but also as a martyr to the truth; and in this last respect the Apostle was to imitate him: he was to seal his doctrine with his blood: and from the awful period, though he perceived it swiftly approaching on the wings of time, the Apostle did not shrink back, nor wish to protract the intervening moments; but, on the contrary, as if it lingered, he desired to hasten its tardy pace. He longed to give this last and greatest proof of his love to Christ, and the church which he had purchased with his own blood. As a good shepherd, he was ready to "lay down his life for the sheep;" and as "he rejoiced in all his sufferings for them," so "if he was offered up upon the sacrifice and service of their faith, he would joy and rejoice with them all." It is probable, it was not long after this, that he wrote his Second Epistle to Timothy, wherein he says, "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand: I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day."

Such was the mark at which the Apostle aimed, the goal to which he run; and if we divest it of those cir-

cumstances which render it peculiar to himself, we shall easily see what the mark is, at which we are to aim. It is to gain a deeper acquaintance, and more intimate union with the Lord Jesus; such as we are authorised by his word to expect: it is to receive larger communications of his Spirit, even to be filled therewith, in order to our entire sanctification and greater usefulness, our possessing all the divine nature, and fulfilling the whole will of God: it is that we may finish the work which he has given us to do, with alacrity and diligence; and suffer all he is pleased to lay upon us with resignation and patience. And lastly, that we may persevere to the end of our lives, in “the work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope;” and if need be, “resist unto blood, striving against sin;” laying down our lives for truth and duty, for Christ and our brethren, if called to it. This is the goal to which we must run, if we would not run in vain.

A few observations upon the manner in which we are to run, shall conclude this discourse. And in this also St. Paul is our pattern. “Not as though I had already attained.” (Ver. 12.) How modest is this great Apostle, and deeply experienced christian, in comparison of many self-conceited novices in our day, who would fain persuade us they are got to the top of the ladder, when, alas! they have scarce begun to climb! (οὐχ ὅτι ἤδη εἰλαβον.) It may be rendered, “Not as though I had already received” all the acquaintance with Christ, or communications of his Spirit, I shall receive; or (ἡ ἤδη τετελειωμαι;) “were already perfected,” *ripened* or *matured* for heaven: not as though I had done all I have to do, suffered all I have to suffer, or were as fully renewed in the image of God, as I

shall be. "But I follow after," (διωκω,) I *pursue*, as one racer does another; "if that I may apprehend that for which I am apprehended of Christ Jesus:" he means, if I may attain that degree of grace and usefulness, which, that I might attain, Christ Jesus laid hold on me by his grace, when I was proceeding in the career of my sins. "Brethren," says he, lest we should suppose that voluntary humility, and not a real conviction of its truth had dictated the preceding observation "I count not myself to have apprehended;" (οὐ λογίζομαι κατεσληφέναι;) I draw this rational, mature, and deliberate conclusion, that "I have not apprehended. But this one thing I do," or rather, (ἐν ᾧ) this one thing I say of myself, "forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press towards the mark." Thus did the Apostle run, and thus was he "minded;" and if we would reach the mark, we must imitate his example.

We must "forget the things behind." We must so forget our past experience, labours, and sufferings, as not to value ourselves upon them, boast of them, or rest in them; but leaving them behind, as it were, must perpetually go forward to experience, do, and suffer still more. Just as a person who is running a race, (the simile here alluded to,) does not every now and then stop short, stand still, and look back with satisfaction and self-approbation upon the ground he has passed: but knowing he has not yet reached the goal, or won the race, and fearing he may lose it after all, and his labour too, presses still forward, and exerts himself to the utmost, forgetting what is already finished of the course, out of eager desire to accomplish what remains: So in that spiritual race, which is set before us; instead

of reflecting with complacency and pride on any thing past, we should, in a sense, forget it all, and account it as nothing in comparison of what is still before us: "Fearing, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, we should come short of it," we should still urge our way with renewed strength, "and labour to enter into that rest which remaineth for the people of God,"

But further. "And reaching forth unto the things before," (τοῖς δὲ ἐμπροσθεν ἐπεκτεινομενος,) stretching forward towards things before. As a racer stretches his body forward, extends his arms, puts forth his legs, and advances continually towards the goal, eagerly longing to reach it, so we, extending, as it were, the arms of faith, and stretching our souls forward in earnest desire and anticipating hope, should move continually towards the mark before described. Thus the Apostle (κατα σκοπον διωκω) "I pursue towards the mark." As a racer strains every nerve, exerts every limb, and puts forth all his strength, that he may win the prize, so should we exercise to the uttermost all our powers, use faithfully all the grace God has bestowed, and "give all diligence to make our calling and election sure." The fire of holy zeal, carrying us on continually to experience, and do, and suffer God's whole will, should ever burn in our heart: "the zeal of his house should eat us up;" it should be "our meat and drink to do the will of our Father who is in heaven." This zeal should manifest itself by a steady attendance upon all the means of grace, by a diligent performance of those works the Lord has called us to, and by a patient enduring of the daily trials we meet with. Thus must we persevere to the end of our race, till the Lord sends the messenger,

death, to call us hence, and we rest from our labours in the paradise above.

Let us, therefore, "as many as are perfect, be thus minded." If we are true christians, savingly acquainted with Christ, interested in him, and united to him; if we are found in Christ, with the love of God shed abroad in our hearts, making us dead to the world and sin; let us keep in view the mark I have been describing, and press on toward it. Let us settle it in our hearts that, whatever we have experienced, done, and suffered, there is infinitely more to the attainment of which we must go forward. We are called, invited, urged by the Lord from heaven, to know yet more of Christ; to have a deeper fellowship with him, and to receive yet larger communications of his grace and Spirit, that we may recover his whole image, and do his whole will. Toward this mark, then, let us continually reach out the hands of strong desire, and active, though humble, faith. Urged by fear, invited by hope, and borne along by the force of love divine, in the way of a vigorous diligence and unwearied patience, let us advance daily nearer to it. Never let us look back, never stand still or loiter in our course; but still "hunger and thirst after righteousness;" still "agonize to enter in at the strait gate;" still return to the battle and the conquest. "Strong in the grace" of Christ, let us push on our victory, give our enemies no quarter, but utterly destroy them, and cause their memory to perish. Still let us "work while it is day," for the honour of our Lord, the profit of our neighbour, and the perfect purification of our own soul. Still let us patiently suffer what he lays upon us, and cheerfully do what he requires of us. And, for our encouragement, let us keep

the prize in view, which is purchased for us by the Redeemer, and which will abundantly recompense all our labours and our sufferings.

CXCVII.

THE SUBJECT, MANNER, AND END OF THE APOSTLES' PREACHING.

COLOSSIANS i. 27, 28.

Christ in you, the hope of glory: whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.

THERE are three questions, which every minister of Christ, who “would not run in vain, nor labour in vain,” and indeed, every professor of christianity who would not be misled in the concerns of his immortal soul, must wish to have resolved to his satisfaction. These questions are,—What is the chief subject of the christian ministry? In what way that ministry may be exercised with the greatest probability of success? And at what end every minister of Christ ought principally to aim and direct his labours?—Now, concerning all these particulars, the very important words just read give us clear and full information, and in fewer words than is done, perhaps, in any other part of the Oracles of God. For we are here informed by St. Paul himself, what was the great subject of his preaching and that of the other Apostles, in what manner they executed their ministry, and what was the end they had in view. And in all these particulars it will readily be allowed that they were proper models by which all fu-

ture ministers of the same blessed Gospel should form their doctrine and practice.—Consider we,

I. THE GREAT SUBJECT OF THE APOSTLES' PREACHING.

“Christ in you the hope of glory.” See ver. 24—29. They “preached Christ,” (2 Cor. iv. 5; Acts v. 42.) This is not to be taken exclusively, as if they did not also preach the Father and the Holy Spirit; for we know, when it was necessary for the information of their hearers, as when they were addressing heathen idolaters, they preached the being and attributes of the only living and true God, of which we have a remarkable example in St. Paul’s sermon at Athens. They also preached the offices and operations of the Holy Spirit, as appears from the abstracts of their sermons, given us in the Acts and in the Epistles. But they especially preached Christ, because in preaching him they also preached the Father and the Holy Spirit, he being one with the Father, and being sent especially to reveal and glorify him; and the Holy Spirit being his Spirit as well as the Father’s, and sent especially to glorify Christ, by revealing him, and taking of the things of Christ and showing them unto us.—They preached him as the true Messiah, promised to the fathers, foretold by the prophets, and sent and manifested in the fulness of time; (Gal. iv. 4;) pointed out, and evidenced to be such, by the testimony of his harbinger John the Baptist, that extraordinary and highly illuminated servant and messenger of God, who came for this very purpose, to be “a witness;”—by his own wonderful works, wrought chiefly for this end; and by the evident accomplishment of the ancient predictions of the prophets, and of

the types and shadows of the law in him.—They preached and bore testimony chiefly in an historical way, which of all others is the most engaging and interesting, to his whole process for the accomplishment of our redemption and salvation.—They preached him in all his offices; as an extraordinary Teacher come from God, whose doctrine, in every part of it, is infallibly true, infinitely momentous, and perfectly adapted, according to the state of mankind, to make them wise unto salvation, and must be heard, believed, and obeyed, on pain of everlasting destruction; (Deut. xviii. 18; Acts iii. 22, 23:) as a prevalent Mediator between God and man, (1 Tim. ii. 5; Heb. ix. 15,) who hath put away sin, with respect to the penitent that believe in him, by the sacrifice of himself, “justifies them by his blood,” “reconciles them to God, by the body of his flesh, through death,” and thus brings nigh those “that were afar off,” on whose mediation therefore, we ought to rely; as an all-sufficient and the only sufficient Saviour from sin and its consequences, (Matt. i. 21,) to whom we must come or apply, for grace and salvation, renouncing all other dependencies, as being no better than broken reeds and refuges of lies; as a Lawgiver and King, to whom our obedience is due, and to whom we must be subject on earth, if we would “reign with him” in heaven: (Heb. v. 9; Rev. xxii. 14; Rom. xiv. 19:) as the final Judge, (Acts x. 42; 2 Cor. v. 10;) and they exhorted that all should give diligence to be “found of him in peace, without spot and blameless.” (2 Pet. iii. 14.) —

To show how he is qualified to sustain these offices, they preached him as being both God and man. (Rom. i. 2; John i. 14; Heb. ii. 14.) By taking our humanity,

he became capable of appearing among us as one of ourselves, instructing us in a free and familiar way, setting us an example in our own frail nature, of sympathizing with us in our infirmities and temptations. Thus he became our kinsman, and had thereby the right of redemption; had a body which he could offer for the expiation of sin; became capable of suffering; and could set us an example, both of suffering and of patience and meekness under suffering; could die, and overcome death by his resurrection; could ascend, and place the human nature on the throne of God, and take possession of the celestial glory and felicity as our forerunner; could appear as our advocate and intercessor before his Father; and could judge us visibly in our nature.— They preached him as “declared to be the Son of God with power,” and that in a sense in which no mere creature could be his son, being “the only begotten of the Father,” having an incommunicable Sonship, being “made much better than the angels;” “the Word,” who “was God,” “God manifest in the flesh,” “Immanuel, God with us,” the Lord, who, “in the beginning laid the foundations of the earth.” Thus he can be present with his people every where, can search the heart; possesses “all power in heaven and on earth;” is “able to save to the uttermost;” is infinite in love, mercy, patience, long-suffering; his sacrifice has infinite merit; being the Prince of Life, he could not be held in death; could confer the Holy Ghost; is able to rule and judge mankind, and to confer eternal life; all which things are proper to Deity, but belong not to any mere creature. They preached him, therefore, as “God manifest in the flesh,” and to be manifested in us by his Spirit to “destroy the works of the devil.” — —

“Christ in you,” says the Apostle, “whom we preach.” (Gal. ii. 20; Eph. iii. 17; Gal. iv. 19.) Now if Christ be in us, it is by his Spirit, (John xiv. 20; comp. Rom. viii. 8, 9;) it being a principal office of the Holy Spirit to take of the things of Jesus, and show them unto us. (John xvi. 14.) If Christ be in us, the knowledge of him is in our understanding, that knowledge spoken of in Matt. xi. 27; Phil. iii. 8—10; Gal. i. 16; 1 John v. 20, by which we are justified; (Isai. liii. 11;) hence the peace of Christ is in our conscience, (John xiv. 27; Col. i. 20; Eph. ii. 16—18;) the love of Christ is in our will and affections, (Eph. iii. 15; 1 Pet. ii. 7;) that love which he that hath not is “anathema.” (1 Cor. xvi. 22.) The mind of Christ appears in our dispositions and tempers, (Phil. ii. 2—5,) and the example of Christ in our practice. (1 John ii. 6.)—Or, in another point of view, Christ is in us—as our “wisdom,” enlightening our minds by his word and Spirit, affording us the knowledge of ourselves, of God, and all spiritual and divine things:—as our “righteousness,” imparting to us an interest in his active and passive obedience, and justifying us by his merits: (Jer. xxiii. 5; Rom. x. 4; 2 Cor. v. 21:)—as our “sanctification,” imparting, out of his fulness, that renewing and sanctifying grace whereby we have power over sin, are saved from it, are dedicated and conformed to God, and made partakers of a divine nature:—as our “redemption” who has assumed our nature, and undertaken to rescue us from all the consequences of our fall.—But how is this, “our hope of glory?” By “glory,” in this place, is meant the same as in Col. iii. 3, and Rom. v. 2: viz., the future and eternal state of the disciples of Christ, which can now be explained no further than by observ-

ing, that it implies a glorious state of the soul in all its powers; of the body in all its parts; of the world in which the saints will dwell, the "new heaven and earth;" of the society they will enjoy, saints and angels, and our Lord Jesus Christ, "the Lord of glory;" and the vision and enjoyment of the God of glory. (Matt. v. 8; 1 John iii. 2; Rev. xxi. 3—7; xxii. 3, 4.)—"Hope" of this glory implies, an earnest desire and expectation of it. *Desire*, arising from a knowledge of its excellency, suitableness, certainty. But this knowledge we have not by nature, for we have not naturally any certain knowledge that there is another life, much less that it is of the nature which the Scripture reveals. (1 Cor. ii. 9.) But if Christ be in us as our wisdom, we receive this knowledge, and the desire to which it gives birth. *Expectation* arises from a title to it. This we have not by any blamelessness, usefulness, or holiness of our own; (Phil. iii. 9;) but when we are justified, and adopted, by Christ in us as our righteousness. (Tit. iii. 7; Rom. viii. 17.) Our expectation also is increased in proportion as we are made meet for the glory in view. Meet we cannot be by any power or efforts merely our own, or by the use of any means, however excellent; but Christ in us as our sanctification, affords us a preparation. But how shall we be brought to glory? Who will take care of our departing soul? Who will raise our fallen and corrupted body? Christ in us as our redemption. — —

II. THE MANNER OF THEIR PREACHING.

"Warning and teaching every man." They addressed both the heads and hearts of their hearers, both their understandings by instructing them, and their affections

by warning them. It is absolutely necessary to do this, and to intermix these. The word rendered “warning,” means also *admonishing*.—Men must be admonished of their errors and sins, and of their danger on account of them, and taught how they may be delivered from them, and may escape that danger; admonished of their duty, and of the will of God concerning them, and taught how they may be enabled to do that duty, and to comply with the Divine will; admonished of their privileges, and taught how they may be enabled to embrace and live up to them.—To apply this to the subject in hand: we should admonish every man of his want of this blessing; that he has not by nature either an hope of glory, or the only source of it, “Christ in him:” of the absolute necessity of both, in order to happiness here and hereafter; of the worth of these things; of a well-grounded and lively hope of glory, and of Christ in us, in order thereto; how entirely trivial and insignificant every thing, even riches, honours, and pleasures, are, in comparison of these things, as we are wont to perceive in affliction, and at a dying hour: of the attainableness of these blessings; of Christ to be in us, and of the hope consequent thereon; that they are free for all, the most ignorant, guilty, depraved, weak, and wretched, not excepted: of the great danger men are in of living and dying, and perishing for ever, for want of them. [Here we might mention different degrees of danger, according to the advantage which persons have had, and abused or neglected to improve.]—“Teaching every man:” how to attain this blessing, viz., by prayer; (Matt. vii. 7—11; Luke xi. 9—13;) by faith in Christ; (John xvii. 20; Eph. iii. 17; Gal. ii. 16—21; v. 6;) Christ is in us by his Spirit, and this is received

by faith, (John vii. 37, 38; Gal. iii. 2, 3, 13, 14;) and this faith is always preceded by repentance, accompanied by love, and followed by obedience and good works. (Jam. ii. 14—26.) How to retain, to increase in, and improve these blessings; by continuing in faith; (Col. i. 23;) for through unbelief it would be lost; (Heb. iii. 6, 12, 13; x. 38; Rom. xi. 20—23;) hence St. Paul's words, Gal. ii. 20: by prayer, watchfulness, self-denial, and purity of spirit and conduct.—“In all wisdom:” in a manner that is rational, scriptural, and consistent; using solid and convincing arguments, and placing them in a clear and lucid order; adapting the matter, manner, and language of every discourse, exhortation, appeal, and reproof, to the state and character of the hearers. The words of the Apostle include personal, domestic, or family warning and instruction, which should also be “in all wisdom,” attending to the time, place, manner, and all other circumstances; so that the reproof and admonition may be calculated to answer the intended end, and do good, and not harm.—It is of vast importance to maintain a meek and a peaceable spirit. (Jam. iii. 13.) — —

III. THE END OF ALL THIS.

“That we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.”—The perfection here intended must be one attainable in this life, because it was a perfection which the Apostles were to be instrumental in producing, or, at least, promoting by their ministry. Thus also Eph. iv. 11—13. It is enjoined by our Lord to his followers. (Matt. v. 48,) and by the Apostle, (2 Cor. xiii. 11.) It implies,—Being perfectly instructed in the doctrines of christianity, at least in all the great and leading

truths, precepts, promises, threatenings, &c.; being acquainted with the nature of the new covenant, in all its parts.—Being possessed of perfect christian graces, the full assurance of faith, of hope, perfect love, (1 John iv. 16—19,) humility, resignation, patience, contentment, meekness, gentleness, loving-kindness, purity.—Enjoying christian privileges in a perfect manner, as justification, adoption, regeneration, sanctification of body soul and spirit, communion with God, an earnest of heaven in our hearts.—Being “perfect in every good work,” (Heb. xiii. 21;) living “soberly, righteously, and godly in the present world;” and performing all christian duties to God, our neighbour, and ourselves; those which are religious, civil, personal, domestic, social; from a proper principle, even love; to a proper end, the glory of God; by a proper rule, not custom, habit, caprice, our own judgment, or will, but the will of God.—This perfection in all its parts, does not exist separate from Christ, but in union with him, and by grace continually derived from him.—It is also through Christ, and could not be acceptable to God were it not “sprinkled with his blood,” and recommended by his intercession. — —

CXCVIII.

CHRISTIANS EXHORTED TO SEEK THE THINGS ABOVE.

COLOSSIANS iii. 1—4.

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.

THE Apostle, supposing the Colossian believers, in agreement with their profession as christians, to be spiritually risen with Christ, and expecting literally to rise with him in the day of resurrection, exhorts them, in these verses, to be heavenly minded. We shall inquire.—To whom the exhortation is given? What it implies? and, By what motives it is enforced.

I. TO WHOM THIS EXHORTATION IS GIVEN?

To those that are “risen with Christ,” and have “Christ” for their “life.” As the resurrection of Christ, most firmly believed among us, draws after it, and ensures, the resurrection of all men, and consequently all men must rise again and live in another state, (1 Cor. xv. 22,) it is evident there is a sense in which all men are “risen with Christ.” And it is undeniable, that all men ought, therefore, in reason, to “seek the things above,” the things which belong to, and are connected with, that state and world, into which

the resurrection from the dead will introduce them; and that it infinitely concerns them so to do. But, alas! the greater part of mankind know nothing of any future state, and therefore cannot be influenced by it. The heathen, the Mohammedans, the Jews, either have no knowledge or expectation of a life after this, or such erroneous views respecting it as, perhaps, are worse than none. Professing christians, however, have better information and more light. They receive the christian creed, and “look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.” There is therefore the more solid ground for addressing the exhortation of the text to them, and they are inexcusable if they do not take it; and, neglecting to do so, they act a most inconsistent part. While, however, they are only nominal christians, they will not take it, for, being born only of the flesh, they will be carnal and earthly. (John iii. 6; Rom. viii. 5.) The Apostle knew this, and therefore did not address this exhortation directly to such, any more than any other part of his epistle,—but to true christians, or true believers in our Lord Jesus Christ, who are, in a peculiar sense, “risen with Christ,” being raised from spiritual death to spiritual life, as is described chap. ii. 12, 13. (See also Eph. ii. 5, 6.) These, persevering in faith, shall certainly rise with him to glory. (1 Cor. xv. 20, 23.)—They are already raised to it, by anticipating hope, to which they are “begotten again by the resurrection of Christ from the dead.” This hope is built on a rock, is lively and joyful, and, by it, they already, as it were, “sit in heavenly places,” and have their “conversation in heaven,” till they attain the fruition of it.—Christ is their “life,” (ver. 4.) See John xi. 25, 26; xiv. 6, 19.) They are “alive from

the dead," (Rom. vi. 13,) "have passed from death unto life," (1 John iii. 14,) through an interest in his merits by faith, through an union with him by the Spirit, through the efficacy of his quickening word. (John vi. 63; Heb. iv. 12.) They are preserved in spiritual life, through his continual intercession, without which the best of us would fall again under guilt and condemnation; and through the continual supplies of his grace obtained in the use of the means of grace, more especially the word of God, (John vi. 33—35;) and prayer, (Jude 20, 21.) — —

II. WHAT IS THE EXHORTATION GIVEN TO SUCH?

"Seek those things which are above;" "set your affections on things above." What are the things above? Things spiritual, in opposition to things carnal: the favour of God; to retain it, to have clearer discoveries of it, a greater degree of it: his image; to be more stamped with it, to bear it in a more perfect and visible manner; communion and intercourse with him.—The things of heaven, in opposition to those of earth: of the intermediate state: of that after the resurrection, including an absolute freedom from the infirmities of the body and mind, from affliction and pain, from temptation, sin, and sorrow; a complete perfection of soul and body, and an inconceivable glory of each; the vision and perfect enjoyment of God; the society of angels and saints, of all the wise and good, the holy and happy; the riches, joys, and glories of that heavenly world. (See Heb. xii. 22—24; Rev. xxi. xxii.)—The things eternal, in preference to those that are temporal, which are also unsatisfying and transitory.

To seek those things implies, that we desire to pursue them in the way which God hath appointed, viz.—By the exercise of that faith, which “is the evidence of things not seen,” (Heb. xi. 1,) having a deep conviction and lively sense of their reality and importance. For a mere opinion of them, however correct, will not suffice. Who would set sail in search of new islands or continents, and encounter the storms and perils of the ocean, with his life and property and all embarked, if he did not believe the real existence of the objects of his search. It is necessary to be persuaded also of the excellency of these things; that they are solid, constant, secure, everlasting, infinitely surpassing all earthly things; and of their attainableness, even by us, notwithstanding our past sins, still remaining imperfection, unfaithfulness, ingratitude, unbelief, and weakness; nay the certainty of attaining them, if we seek them in the right way.—By an ardent and joyful hope of them, grounded on our being the children of God, and heirs of those heavenly joys and glories.—By shunning whatever we know would grieve the Spirit of God, and so prevent our attaining the objects of our pursuit, and by conscientiously using all those means which are calculated to promote and ensure our attainment of them.—But we are especially exhorted to “set our affections” on those things, for without this, we seek them in vain. Our thoughts must be set on them, for they should be made the matter of our daily meditation. (προνοεῖτε.) We must *discern* their nature, value, excellence, which we do not by nature, (1 Cor. ii. 14;) must *mind, regard, esteem* them; *desire* and *covet* them, sincerely, fervently with all our heart; must delight in them; in a word, *love* them. For we should remember, we cannot “set

our affections on things above," and on things beneath also; we cannot go two ways at once, nor be at the same time spiritually and carnally minded: "if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." (1 John ii. 15.) —

III. WHAT ARE THE MOTIVES WHEREBY IT IS ENFORCED?

"For ye are dead:" dead as to sin, so to the world and all earthly things, and that both by profession as christians, and by an indispensable obligation, laid upon you by Him, whose laws you have engaged to observe. Yea, and you have solemnly promised and covenanted with Him, at least at your baptism, to "re-nounce the pomps and vanities" of this evil world, to conduct ourselves as "strangers and pilgrims" on earth, and to "seek a better country," even a heavenly.— You are also dead in another sense, your "body is dead because of sin," (Rom. viii. 10,) is sentenced to die; and till that event take place, your life here on earth is hardly worthy of being called life, compared with the life to be expected. It is rather death than life, because of the imperfection, shortness, and uncertainty of it. Life implies sensibility, activity, and enjoyment; these are enjoyed by living creatures, in different degrees: but how imperfectly do we possess them at present! how dull our sensations! how small our activity! how few our enjoyments! As to its shortness, we are sentenced to return to dust, and the sentence has already begun to be executed. In respect of its uncertainty, "it is a vapour," a "shadow;" and by this unsubstantial and fleeting vapour only we hold our connection with this world; and shall we then set our

affections on that which is not? on that whereon we have no hold?—But there is provided for you a life worthy of your whole affection, of your highest esteem, most earnest desire, most lively expectation, and most cordial delight;—a life, solid, satisfying, constant, eternal. This is properly *your life*, being procured by Christ for you, promised to you in his Gospel, and, in consequence of his resurrection and ascension, received and taken possession of on your account. This life at present “is hid;” *i.e.* concealed from you, by the veil of the flesh and the visible heavens. Your senses can give you no information concerning it, just as the senses of the unborn child cannot discover to it the life it shall enter upon after its birth. It is “laid up;” reserved, kept, secured “with Christ,” where he, your living head, is, and where his members shall be; laid up with him, who has taken possession of it for us, and, having “all power in heaven and on earth,” being “head of all principality and power,” no creature, no enemy can dispossess him of it. It is laid up in God, in the heart and centre, so to speak, of Deity, and all the infinite perfections of God, especially his wisdom, power, love, faithfulness, mercy, and even justice, (Heb. vi. 10,) stand engaged to confer it upon persevering believers; and upon you, if you are, and continue to be such.—“When Christ,” &c.; the abruptness of this sentence surrounds us with sudden light; “who is our life,”—the procurer and giver of our spiritual life, the fountain of our holiness and happiness, in time and in eternity, “shall appear,” in the clouds of heaven, (which he soon shall, for “Behold,” he says, “I come quickly,”) “then shall ye also appear with him.” He will come and take you hence by death, when your spirits shall be instantly

with him; (John xiv. 3; 2 Cor. v. 8; Phil. i. 21;) and he will appear, the second time, unto your final salvation. (Heb. ix. 28; Tit. ii. 13; Rev. i. 7.) Then especially you shall appear with him, (1 Thess. iv. 14—17,) “in glory,” bearing his glorious image; (1 Cor. xv. 49;) having glorious souls and glorious bodies, such as Moses and Elijah had when they appeared at Christ’s transfiguration; shall be introduced into a glorious world, amongst glorious company; shall be with the Lord of glory, be admitted to the sight, to a familiar converse and enjoyment of the God of glory. (Rev. xxii. 4; 1 John iii. 2.)—Now is it not reasonable that we should “set our affections” on this blessed and glorious state and place? — —

CXCIX.

WHEN THE WORD OF GOD IS PREACHED, AND THE EFFECT IT PRODUCES WHEN RECEIVED AS SUCH.

1 THESSALONIANS ii. 13.

We thank God without ceasing, because, when ye received the Word of God, which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but (as it is in truth) the Word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.

THIS invaluable little Epistle, which, together with an admirable outline of christian doctrine and practice, contains all the grand evidences of the Gospel, was, it seems, the first of the inspired writings addressed by St. Paul to the Greeks. It was written, within twenty

years after the death and resurrection of Christ, to the christian converts in Thessalonica, a large, populous, and maritime town of Macedonia, and the metropolis of that country. As this town was not only a place of great trade, but, at that time, the residence of the Roman pro-consul, who governed the province, and of the questor, who had the care of the emperor's revenues, there was a constant resort of strangers to it from all parts, many of whom were men of genius and learning. Like all other parts of Greece, however, it was in a state of great ignorance, as to matters of religion, and utterly sunk in idolatry and all sorts of wickedness. To this town, as well as to Philippi, Berea, and other parts of Macedonia, St. Paul had been called, by a heavenly vision, to preach the Gospel, where he went, in company with Silas and Timothy, and where his word was attended with great success. In all these places, however, he and his companions repeatedly encountered the danger of their lives, and suffered much from the persecutions excited by the Jews. But this circumstance, painful as it was, like all others befalling them, by the good providence of God, only tended to the confirmation of the christian faith, and the further progress of the Gospel. It proved, beyond a doubt, that the Apostles had no sinister end in view in their preaching, and that they considered their message to be of such importance to the glory of God, and the salvation of mankind, that they durst not conceal it, whatever sufferings the delivery of it might bring upon themselves. And since, added to this, they could appeal to their hearers, as St. Paul does in this chapter, that their whole behaviour among them had been unblameable and holy, and that God from heaven had

sealed their testimony, by enabling them to do signs and wonders, and by conferring on their converts the miraculous gifts, as well as the sanctifying influences of his Holy Spirit, so that the "Gospel came not to them in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance," (ch. i. 5,) nothing seemed to be wanting to demonstrate to them the truth and importance of the new doctrine. Thus, in this chapter, the Apostle says, "Yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you that it was not in vain," &c. (ver. 1—13.)—Inquire we from the words of the text,—

I. WHEN MAY IT PROPERLY BE SAID THAT THE WORD, NOT OF MEN, BUT OF GOD, IS PREACHED TO A PEOPLE?

It cannot be said that the word of God is preached when doctrine evidently false is preached, or such as is condemned by the Holy Scriptures. As for instance, in some of the various branches of the Socinian, Antinomian, Pharisaic, and other doctrine.—Nor, when doctrine is preached which although not evidently condemned by the Scripture, or false, yet is not contained therein, and therefore, at best is doubtful; as are many branches of mystic doctrine, that this earth was once the habitation of angels, and upon their fall was reduced to the chaotic state described in Gen. i. 2; that hell will be in the sun; that the torments of hell will have an end, &c. — Nor, when trivial doctrine is preached, and such as the Holy Scriptures lay but little or no stress upon; as that we ought to use, or not to use, a form of prayer; to kneel, or not to kneel, at the sacrament.—Nor when uninteresting doctrine is

preached, and such as, however important and useful at another time, and to another people, does not particularly concern nor suit the state of those to whom it is delivered; as when christian perfection is preached to a drunkard, or justification and peace with God, or the promises of eternal life, to the impenitent.—We have reason to suspect that the word, not of God, but of man, is in some degree preached when the preacher is evidently influenced by sinister motives; as by a view to wealth, or ease, or honour: or, when his own practice contradicts his doctrine, and gives the lie to it, for then, it appears; he does not believe it himself.—But when, like the first teachers of christianity, the preacher has no worldly advantages to expect, but rather poverty, reproach, and sufferings, as the fruit of his labours; and when his conduct shows that he firmly believes his own doctrine, and that it has a powerful influence on his heart and life.—Again, we have especial reason to believe his doctrine is from God, when it is evidently scriptural, and therefore true, important, and of particular concern to those to whom it is declared. And above all, when it is declared by the Scripture to be essential to salvation.—It is not a sufficient objection to this, that the doctrine is clothed in language neither elegant nor pure; is represented without any proper method or arrangement of ideas; is delivered in a manner neither engaging nor affecting.—This word of God is termed twice in this chapter “the Gospel of God,” is termed by our Lord, “the truth,” (John viii. 32; xvi. 13,) as also by St. Paul, (2 Thess. ii. 13,) and by St. Peter, (1 Ep. i. 22,) and in many places by St. John; by St. James, “the word of truth,” i. 18,) and by St. Paul, “the word of the truth of the Gos-

pel," (Col. i. 5.) It is partly historical, doctrinal, preceptive, promissive, comminatory. — Many specimens of this faithful preaching are given us in the abstracts of the Apostles' sermons in the Acts; especially see ch. x. 34—43, xiii. 17—41, xvii. 22—31. See also Rom. iii. 9—28; x. 8—15; Isai. lii. 7; lxi. 1—3.

II. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN THEIR RECEIVING IT, NOT AS THE WORD OF MEN, BUT THE WORD OF GOD?

It is not received, as "the word of God, but as of man," if received with inattention, with irreverence, with unconcern, with unbelief, or even doubt as to its truth and importance, and when received with after neglect and disobedience. Not that the word even of man, may not be attended, and heard with much respect, belief, and obedience; but if what is really the word of God be not attended to, believed, and obeyed, it is evident it is received only as the word of man.—Positively, it is received as the word of God if received—with fixed and serious attention. Shall not the creature attend when the Creator, Preserver, and Redeemer speaks, and we know that he speaks to us?—with deep reverence,—self-abasing humility,—lively concern on account of the interest we have in the things revealed;—assured faith, as to the truth, importance, and suitableness of what is spoken;—fervent prayer, since we cannot understand the word unless we are taught by God's Spirit; (1 Cor. ii. 11);—sincere gratitude; what a blessing to have God speak to us!—ardent love of the truth, though it may condemn and distress us, though it be "quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword;" (Heb. iv. 12;—a meek and

patient and; (Jam. i. 19—21:—a firm purpose of obeying the will of God. (Jam. i. 22.)—

III. INTO THE EFFECTS PRODUCED BY IT, WHEN THUS RECEIVED.

“It effectually worketh in you that believe.” Amongst its happy effects, are repentance, viz., illumination, conviction, humiliation, hatred of sin, and change of life. (Acts ii. 37; 1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25; 1 Thess. i. 5—10.) Confidence, and peace with God; (Rom. x. 17; v. 1;) regeneration; (Jam. i. 18; 1 Pet. i. 23;) a lively hope of immortality; (2 Tim. i. 10, 12; Tit. i. 2, 3; 1 Pet. i. 3;) a spiritual and heavenly mind; (Col. iii. 1; Phil. i. 20;) and deadness to the world; (1 John v. 4;) love to God and man; (1 Thess. iii. 12;) this love is humble, resigned, zealous, obedient; (1 Cor. xiii. 4; John xiv. 15, 21, 23; 1 John v. 3;) benevolence to all men; the word of God, showing that all are the workmanship of one Creator, under the care of the same Divine providence, and the subjects of the same call in the Gospel: a meek, gentle, and long-suffering mind towards all: a merciful, sympathising, and liberal mind: a sober, temperate, and pure mind: (Tit. ii. 11, 12:) a watchful and serious mind: (1 Thess. v. 4—9:) the word of God, revealing serious and awful things, should create a corresponding temper in us: a courageous and brave mind; (2 Tim. i. 7, 8;) a growing and progressive conformity to Christ. (Eph. iv. 11—16; 2 Tim. iii. 17.)—

CC.

REASONS FOR COMFORT CONCERNING
THEM THAT DIE IN THE LORD.

1 THESSALONIANS iv. 13, 14.

I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

WHAT an unspeakable blessing to mankind, involved as they are, in sin and sorrow, surrounded with the dying and the dead, infirm themselves, and hastening to their own dissolution, are the doctrines and facts revealed and attested in the Holy Scriptures! Were it not for these, we should still "sit in darkness, and in the region of the shadow of death," like the ancient heathen, being as ignorant of ourselves as of our Maker, and neither understanding the proper end of life, nor what becomes of us at death. But the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, "hath brought life and immortality to light;" "the Day-spring from on high hath visited us;" and unless we obstinately shut our eyes against his beams, through unbelief and sin, we become "children of the light and of the day." We are no longer a prey to vain reasonings and fruitless conjectures, with respect to the invisible and eternal state which awaits us; but we "know what is the hope of our calling, and the riches of the glory" of our future inheritance, and have a prospect of the felicity and glory reserved by

God for those that love him, and can rejoice in expectation of it. Death itself is abolished; or its nature is so changed, that, instead of being viewed as the king of terrors, or as the gloomy entrance into a state of annihilation or misery, it is now considered as a messenger of peace, and as the gate of life and salvation; and we are no longer "ignorant concerning those that sleep," so as to "sorrow even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that sleep," &c. It is highly probable that the Apostle, having observed among the Thessalonian believers before he left them, or having been informed by Timothy, how tenderly they had lamented the departure of such as had been taken from them, since they had embraced christianity, and foreseeing what a source of excessive grief the death of pious friends would become among the followers of Jesus, in every age, that he intended in this admirable passage to suggest such considerations, as, when cordially believed, would be effectual, if not entirely to remove, yet greatly to alleviate the sorrow of all who might be called to suffer such bereavements. And as Dr. Doddridge says, "Who can be sufficiently thankful for the strong consolation which these Divine words administer? How many drooping hearts have been cheered by them in every age, while successively mourning over their pious dead! How often have we ourselves been driven to them, as to a sacred anchor, when our hearts have been overwhelmed within us! And if God continue us a few years longer, what repeated occasions may arise of our flying to them again!" Let us have recourse to them, at this time, my brethren, in the distress many of us are experi-

encing from the unexpected loss of our late dear friend. May the surviving relatives be supported and comforted in their heavy trial! and may the painful dispensation be sanctified to them and to us! —

I. OF WHOM DOES THE APOSTLE HERE SPEAK?

Of them that “sleep;” that “sleep in Jesus.” The whole context shows that the Apostle speaks of such as had died. To term death sleep, was very usual with the inspired writers. “The stout-hearted are spoiled,” says David, (Ps. lxxvi. 5,) “they have slept their sleep.” “Those that sleep in the dust of the earth,” says Daniel, “shall awake.” (Dan. xii. 2.) “Many are weak and sickly among you,” says St. Paul, “and many sleep.” (1 Cor. xi. 30.) “We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.” (1 Cor. xv. 51.) And in the next chapter to that from which we take our text, “That whether we sleep or wake” *i. e.* die or live, “we may live together with him.” (Ver. 10.) It is with great propriety that death is termed sleep; for sleep is in all respects a suitable emblem of it.* In sleep all the senses are locked up, so in death; in sleep the members are motionless, so in death: in sleep we rest on our beds, so when we die we rest on our beds of dust, (Isai. lvii. 2,) from toil and labour, sickness and pain in this world: from sleep we awake; so from death. (Dan. xii. 2.) But of this afterwards. —

It is not, however, of all who die, that the Apostle here speaks; but of those that “sleep in Jesus,” or, as it is expressed Rev. xiv. 13, “that die in the Lord.”

* *κασιγνήτω θανάτω.* Hom. *Iliad*, lib. xiv. line 231. *Consanguineus Lethi sopor.* Virgil, *Æn.* lib. vi. line 278.

But who are these? They who are first “in the Lord.” But how, by what means, are we “in him?”—Not merely by being baptised, and professing christianity (Rom. ii. 28, 29; Tit. i. 16; 2 Tim. ii. 19.) Not merely by attending ordinances, and using the means. (2 Tim. iii. 5; John iv. 23.) Not by mere regularity and unblamableness of conduct. (Rev. iii. 1; John iii. 3; Rom. viii. 9; 2 Cor. xiii. 5.) Not by mere outward good works. (1 Cor. xiii. 3; 1 John iv. 7, 8.) Not even by faith, in the sense wherein many use the term, nor by orthodox opinions; or believing the articles of the christian faith: for a man may “hold the truth in unrighteousness,” and “the devils believe” many, if not all truths; nay, and even “tremble,” and remain devils still.—But by faith of another kind, which alone avail-eth. (Gal. v. 6.) He that has this faith, whatever he may want, consistently with this quality, is “in Christ.” He that has not faith, whatever he may have, is not in him. But what is this faith! It is exercised in Christ, (1 John v. 11—13; John i. 12; iii. 16, 18, 36; vi. 29, 40; Gal. ii. 20,) which is preceded by repentance towards God. (Acts xx. 21.)—It implies a persuasion, that he is the Son of God; (Matt. xvi. 16; John xx. 31; 1 John iv. 14;) that he hath lived, died, arisen, ascended; that he is exalted to the right hand of God,—That he is an infallible Teacher, who “for this end was born, to bear witness to the truth:” relying on the certain truth and infinite importance of his doctrine, attending to and obeying it, from the heart; (Rom. vi. 17;)—that he is a prevalent Mediator; placing confidence in his atonement and intercession for reconciliation with God, and all blessings:—that he is a mighty Saviour, and the only Saviour: (Acts iv. 12;) and

coming to, and trusting in him, (John vi.; Eph. i. 12,) for deliverance from the guilt and power of sin; for restoration, protection, and preservation: that he is a Lawgiver, Governor, and Judge; being subject to him as such, and preparing to meet him in judgment.—This faith should be accompanied with love; (Gal. v. 6;) especially to Christ; (2 Cor. v. 14, 15; 1 Pet. i. 8; ii. 7;) including esteem, desire, delight, zeal.—It implies, therefore, union with him; (Eph. iii. 17; Gal. ii. 20;) as a wife with her husband; (Matt. xix. 5; 1 Cor. vi. 17;) as a branch with the tree; (John xv. 4;) a member of the human body with the head; (Col. ii. 19; Eph. iv. 15, 16.)—It implies an interest in him, as a wife has in her husband, a branch in the tree, especially as to his merits, obedience unto death, as the “Lord our righteousness.”—Hence it implies freedom from condemnation; (Rom. viii. 1;) gratuitous and perfect justification; (John iii. 18; Acts xiii. 38, 39.)—By faith receiving, (Gal. iii. 2, 5,) and walking after the Spirit. (Rom. viii. 1, 4.)—A new creation; (2 Cor. v. 17; Gal. vi. 15.)—Universal and constant obedience; (1 Cor. vii. 19; 1 John ii. 3, 4; John xiv. 21; xv. 10; 1 John v. 3.)—In this obedience we must persevere till death, if we would “sleep in Jesus,” (Col. i. 23; Heb. iii. 6, 14; x. 38; Rom. xi. 21, 22; Rev. ii. 10, 25; iii. 11; Jude 20, 21.) — —

II. WHAT ARE THE THINGS CONCERNING SUCH, OF WHICH WE OUGHT NOT TO BE IGNORANT?

That being in him, by such a faith as hath been described, productive of such fruits, they belong to him and are precious in his sight. They are “his people, and the sheep of his pasture;” he is their God;

their Shepherd, who knows, acknowledges, and takes care of them; John x. 14, 15, 27—29;) they are his disciples, (John viii. 31,) his family, (Heb. iii. 6,) his spouse, (2 Cor. xi. 2; Rev. xix. 7;) his members, (Eph. v. 29—32.) Hence not only in life, but even in death, they are dear to him. Their death is “precious in his sight,” (Ps. cxvi. 15,) and, like all other things which befel them, is under the direction of his providence, and shall promote their good. This we must believe, “if we believe that Jesus died and rose again,” notwithstanding their sins before they believed, or their corruptions or infirmities after. For his death hath expiated their sins, and his resurrection showed that the atonement was accepted. By dying he procured the grace of God for them, and by his resurrection received it, to bestow upon them, that their nature might be perfectly changed, and all their corruptions done away; he died and rose that he might ascend and appear in the presence of God for them as their advocate and intercessor, that they might have strength to hold fast their profession, and that their infirmities and failings might not be imputed to them.

Now as he is not the God, the shepherd, the husband “of the dead, but of the living,” therefore they shall not die, but only *sleep*, even as to their bodies, and shall certainly awake, (Dan. xii. 2; Isai. xxvi. 19; John v. 25—29; Rom. viii. 10,) and be most gloriously changed, (Phil. iii. 21,) their bodies being rendered beautiful, glorious, spiritual, and immortal, and furnished with members and senses far superior to the present, which will be inlets to greater pleasure, more convenient for use, and perfectly suited to that much superior state and heavenly world into which they will be admitted.

Of all this, Christ's death and resurrection affords an assurance. (See the text.) For they seal and confirm his doctrine, and that of the Apostles, on this head, which was most explicit, clear, and full: having passed through death to life, and being at the right hand of God, he is "the resurrection and the life," (John xi. 25,) and he is able to raise our bodies; his death and resurrection are a pledge and earnest of ours; he rose as a public person, "the first fruits of them that slept." (1 Cor. xv. 20.) —

But shall we lie in a state of insensibility till the morning of the resurrection? If so, it will appear to us, and will actually be to us, the very next moment after death; time, in that case, being, as it were annihilated. — — But it will not be so, for the soul does not sleep: it "returns to God that gave it." It does not sleep even during its union with this dull and sluggish body, and while the body literally sleeps, as appears from the phenomena of dreams. — — Much less does it sleep when disunited from the body. Even when the latter "is dead, because of sin," (Rom. viii. 10,) "the spirit is life because of righteousness." Neither the souls of the wicked nor of the righteous sleep. The former, according to St. Peter, are "spirits in prison," and according to our Lord, "in torments." (Luke xvi. 23, 25.) As to the righteous, they cannot be said to sleep who "live together with him;" (ch. v. 10;) who "because he lives, live also;" who being "absent from the body, are present with the Lord;" having "departed are with Christ;" are with "him in paradise," like the penitent thief, that garden of unspeakable pleasures and delights, not, I presume, to sleep there, are "with him where he is, to behold his glory." Having persevered in faith

and patience, they already “inherit the promises;” and having “failed on earth,” are already “welcomed into everlasting habitations.”

We ought not to be ignorant, that death to them has been “gain;” and that they enjoy many advantages above us. We are still subject to labour and toil, care and fear; temptation, sin, and sorrow; affliction, pain, and death; are chained to this lump of clay; to this *dead* body; are separated from the Lord and his angels and saints; from all the company and enjoyments of paradise, and of the third heaven, by this thick vail of flesh, this partition wall; shut out by it from the vision and enjoyment of God, and are in a state of absence from him. This is not the case of those that sleep in Jesus; they “being absent from the body, are present with the Lord;” it is not the case with our departed friend! She is free from all these miseries, clogs, and impediments. She is in that paradise in which St. Paul, when caught up into it, “heard unspeakable words:” she is with Jesus, and finds, by experience, that it is “far better” than being here: she “has come to Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.” (Heb. xii. 22. 23.)—Well might St. Paul affirm that to die is “*gain*,” I mean, to those, to whom “to live, is Christ” and that for them “to depart” hence is (πολλω μαλλον κρεισσον,) “*better by much and far*.” (Phil. i. 23.)*

We ought not to be ignorant that we shall see and meet them again, and be with them and with the Lord for ever. See ver. 14—18.— —

This leads me to consider,

* Vulg. *Multo magis melius*. This, it is justly observed by Mac-knight, is the highest superlative which can possibly be formed.

III. THE END FOR WHICH WE OUGHT NOT TO BE
IGNORANT OF THESE THINGS CONCERNING THEM.

“That we sorrow not, even as others that have no hope.”—Sorrow we may, with moderation. Human nature is so constituted that it cannot but feel, and that very sensibly, on the departure of friends; and grace was not meant to destroy nature, or to annihilate our affections, but only to regulate them; not to make us hard as stoics, but wise as christians. Feel we may, and shall, at such times; but in the midst of our feelings we ought to “possess our souls in patience,” and to remain masters of our reason and of our peace.—Nay, to mourn for the dead, especially for such as have “died in the Lord,” is not only lawful, but commendable: it is a duty so to do. The not doing it is reprov- ed by God himself as a sin; (Isai. lvii. 1,) and to die unlamented is threatened as a curse. (Jer. xxii. 18, 19.) But we must not sorrow as “others that have no hope,” whether heathens or but merely professing christians. The heathen, “being without God,” without Christ, and the Scriptures, were “strangers from the covenants of promise,” (Eph. ii. 12;) and also “had no hope,” viz., of another life. They had no proper object of hope in this case. “Life and immortality” had not been “brought to light;” the certainty and the nature of future happiness had not been revealed to them from God, and the light of reason was too obscure to give them any satisfactory information concerning it. They had no sufficient ground of hope; no positive declaration and promise of God on the subject, and much less any facts like those of the resurrection and ascension of Christ, as the representative and forerunner of his

people, to build their hopes upon. Hence, not being assured even of the immortality of the soul, and utterly unacquainted with the resurrection of the body, they thought their friends to be lost, and never expected to see them again; they therefore sorrowed excessively, and expressed their grief in cutting their flesh, making themselves bald, in using doleful songs and ejaculations, expressed sometimes on instruments of music, which the Jews had learned, (Matt. ix. 23,) but which God forbade his people to use. (Lev. xix. 28; Deut. xiv. 1.) We must not sorrow thus; *we* who are assured of the great and comfortable truths of the Gospel.—

Nor must we sorrow as mere nominal, although professing christians, who have not a lively faith in the divine declarations and promises, or in the resurrection of Christ, as the first fruits of them that sleep; have no proper views of the nature and excellency of future felicity; have no assurance of their own or their departed friends' title and meetness for this felicity, or that they are in the way to it, and hence have no well-grounded and lively hope of it. Therefore they sorrow excessively on such occasions, but we must not sorrow thus. — —

Moreover, we should consider, that whether our sorrow be on account of our friends, who have gone before us, or on our own, it is needless.—Needless on their account, who are not lost themselves, even as to their bodies, much less as to their souls: who have lost nothing, unless labour, toil, affliction, temptation, infirmity; have gained much, as we have seen. Instead of grieving, we should therefore rather rejoice: as Christ said, "If ye loved me, ye would rejoice." "Who," said Tully, though a heathen, "would lament the death

of a friend, unless he supposed him to be deprived of all the enjoyments of life, and sensible of the loss of them?" How much more may the christian adopt such words!—Surely, instead of grieving for them, we should grieve for ourselves, and say,

"O when will death (now stingless) like a friend
Admit me of their choir? O when will death,
This mouldering, old partition wall throw down,
Give beings, one in nature, one abode?"

—But perhaps it is on our own account that we grieve; our grief is selfish. We are deprived of their company and friendship, their counsel and help.—Yet this loss is but momentary. They are only gone before, and we shall very soon overtake them; nor will they "without us, be made perfect." (Heb. xi. 40.) Friendship is not given in vain; even this is a pledge of immortality.—

INFER,—

That, as our future felicity depends on our being in Christ, and persevering until we sleep in him, we ought to examine ourselves on these heads. Are we in him? do we persevere in the faith? &c.—If so, how much more reason have we to desire, than to fear, our death? like St. Paul, (Phil. i. 20,) and the first christians. (2 Cor. v. 1.) This is not our rest, nor portion. It does not satisfy; we have no hold on it. But

"There is our house and portion fair,
Our treasure and our heart are there,
And our abiding home."

—That for our caution, and to induce us to use such endeavours as may promote the salvation of others, we ought not to be ignorant of the dreadful state of those

that die out of Christ. Such have as much reason to fear, as the others to hope. Their souls shall not die, or sleep, but live in eternal misery: — — their bodies shall be raised to share with their souls in the torments of hell: — — they shall meet their companions in sin: they shall appear, and be condemned at the judgment-seat of Christ: they shall “be ever,” not with the Lord—but the devil and his angels. — — That there should be no delay; for who can tell what a day may bring forth?

CCI.

RELIGION BRIEFLY STATED.

2 TIMOTHY i. 5.

Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned.

ALTHOUGH, as will easily be allowed, nothing can be more important to the professors of the true religion, than to understand the religion they profess, yet it must be acknowledged, that there is no subject of which many, who are called christians, are so ignorant or concerning which they so grievously err. Some mistake the whole nature of it, and make it to consist in that which either has no relation to it, or, at best, is but a mere circumstance of it, or a means of attaining it; while others have very partial, confined, and even contradictory views of it. Now what can be the cause of this? Is it that the Holy Scriptures, from which they profess to draw their sentiments, are not clear

upon the subject of religion? By no means. These records of divine truth are, in every part, perfectly explicit, and frequently very full, respecting it. And sometimes, that our memories may not be burdened, nor our minds perplexed by a variety of particulars, we find the whole of religion, its nature and properties, causes and effects, set forth in one short sentence. Many instances of this might be produced, especially from the discourses of our Lord, and the writings of St. Paul. But I shall content myself now with referring to the admirable and comprehensive sentence, which I have just read as the subject of our present meditation. Let any man well consider and understand this sentence, and he cannot be ignorant of the religion of Jesus Christ. But as to the experience and practice of it, that, I confess, is another point, and not so easily attained.—Inquire we,

I. WHAT IS MEANT HERE BY “THE COMMANDMENT,” AND HOW IT APPEARS THAT THE END OF THIS IS “LOVE.”

The commandment means, the moral law. (Rom. vii. 9—13; 1 Tim. i. 7—10.) It is so called, because of the natural authority of the precepts themselves, the law enjoining nothing but what is the creature’s duty; because of the authority of the Legislator, who, as our Creator, Preserver, Redeemer, Governor, and Judge, has an absolute right to command us; because the end of this is love. (Deut. vi. 5; x. 12; Matt. xxii. 36, 37.) The Word of God in general, or the doctrine of the Gospel may be meant. (Ps. xix. 8; John xii. 48—50.) This may be termed a commandment, as enjoining with authority both what we are to believe as truth, and per-

form as duty; because, as a law, this Word, or this Gospel, will be the rule whereby we shall be judged at the last day. This seems by the context to be, at least, a part of the Apostle's meaning. (Comp. ver. 3 with ver. 10, 11, 18, Gr.) Love is the end of the commandment in this sense. (1 John iii. 16, 23; iv. 7; Eph. iv. 11—16.)—Or it may mean, true religion, inculcated in this Gospel by the doctrine of Christ. (2 Pet. ii. 21. This is, by many, thought to be the Apostle's principal meaning. Religion is called a "commandment," because it is not an indifferent thing, that may be neglected or delayed as we please, but is of necessary obligation upon all. Every part of religion also, whether it consist in faith or practice, is commanded of God. As God has not left us at liberty to neglect religion if we please, so he has not left it to our choice to have what religion we choose. We must have such as he has appointed, or none. Hence (εθελοπροστασια) *will-worship* is censured by the Apostle. (Col. ii. 23.) What does not bear the divine impress is not acceptable to God. (Matt. xv. 9.) Hence they that are religious are servants of God, under his command in every thing; especially in the things that concern his worship and service: they "receive the law at his mouth." Again, love is the end of this, the sum total of religion. (1 Cor. xiii. 1—13.)—Consider,

II. THE NATURE AND PROPERTIES OF THIS LOVE.

God is its principal object, and love to him is the union of the soul with him. (1 John iv. 16.) All its powers are collected and engaged for God: esteem, in viewing him as the supreme perfection: desire, in regarding him as the chief good of a rational and immortal crea-

ture: gratitude, as he is the only source of all the blessings we enjoy, and has “first loved us,” and testified his love by innumerable benefits: tenderness and sympathy, as to an original, of which we are images; a Father, of whom we are children: acquiescence and joy, in the possession of communion with him.—As to the properties of this love, in respect of God, it is humble, resigned, patient, contented, zealous, obedient, and liberal in promoting his glory. Consider it in respect of man, its nature is different, according to the state and character of the objects of it: towards the children of God, implying esteem, desire, delight, confidence, in proportion as they discover the likeness of our Father in heaven; towards our neighbours in general, respect, good-will, sympathy; towards our friends, fidelity and gratitude; towards our enemies, forbearance, equity, desire of reconciliation. In its properties, with respect to all men, it is sincere, meek, gentle, long-suffering, forgiving, benevolent, true, just, compassionate, bountiful. — —

III. THE PRINCIPLES FROM WHICH IT PROCEEDS, OR WITH WHICH IT IS ATTENDED.

“A pure heart.” No man’s heart is pure by nature, but must be purified by grace, the blood of Christ, the Spirit of God, his word and faith. This love can only exist in us, so far as our hearts are purified from the love of the world, from the love of sin, and from all inordinate self-love, all which are contrary to its nature: and from pride, self-will, impatience, anger, malevolence, resentment, which are contrary to its properties. This love always implies purity of affection and of intention: but this is professed in vain if there be not—

“A good conscience:” which implies—an enlightened and well-informed conscience, the conscience being naturally dark and uninformed:—an awakened and tender conscience, it being naturally asleep and hardened;—a sprinkled and peaceful conscience since it is naturally guilty:—an approving conscience “void of offence towards God and towards man,” testifying “that in simplicity and godly sincerity, we have our conversation in this world;” that we do not live in known sin, or in the omission of known duty. This cannot exist without its root, which is,—“Faith unfeigned:” faith in God, (Heb. xi. 6;) in his revealed will; in the truths and promises of the everlasting Gospel; and in Jesus Christ, in whom those truths and “promises are yea and amen:” and here it must be particularly noticed, that in these respects this faith must be unfeigned.—By this we obtain an enlightened awakened, sprinkled, and approving conscience.—By it our hearts are purified, (Acts xv. 9,) and love to God and man are produced: for by faith we learn God’s loveliness and loving-kindness.—It is humble, self-denying, patient, resigned, &c.—It represents to us all mankind as the creatures, the offspring of one Father, the care of the same Providence, the objects of the same call to salvation.—Attain faith, and the rest will follow. — —

CCII.

THE DOCTRINE WHICH IS FAITHFUL, AND
WORTHY OF ALL ACCEPTATION.

1 TIMOTHY i. 15.

*This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance,
that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners;
of whom I am chief.*

It deeply concerns all teachers of religion to take care that their doctrine be true; which implies, on the one hand, that they do not teach what they know to be false, to deceive others, in which case they would be impostors and knaves; and on the other hand, that they be not deceived themselves; in which case they would be fools and blind. They should take further care, that their doctrine be important, for all things that are true are not important, even things contained in the Bible, not necessary to be known and, it may be said, hardly useful. They should also take care, that their doctrine be suitable to the state and character of the hearers; for there are many important truths, not suited to the state and character of all.—Some doctrines, however, are of that nature that all of these excellencies meet in them. They are infallibly true, deeply important, suited to all; never out of season. Such is the doctrine contained in my text.—“This is a faithful saying.” It is a true saying, an important saying, and one “worthy of all acceptance.” High and low, young and old, saints and sinners, all are concerned, very much concerned in it; it is useful to all, necessary to all.—Consider,

I. THE MATTER OF FACT HERE ASSERTED.

“Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” “Christ,” that is, the Messiah, promised to Adam, Abraham, Jacob, to Israel by Moses, to David, and the prophets, “came into the world.” The word *Christ* of Greek derivation, and that of *Messiah* in the Hebrew, both signify the *Anointed One*. To explain the reason of this name it must be observed that of old it was usual to appoint and set apart persons to various offices by anointing them; more especially to the prophetic, priestly, and kingly offices. Thus Moses anointed Aaron, to make him a priest. (Lev. viii. 12.) Samuel anointed Saul and David to be kings, (1 Sam. x. 1; xvi. 13;) and Elijah anointed Elisha to be prophet in his room. This ceremony was used by the express appointment of God, and was meant to signify, not only that the persons so anointed were called of God to these offices, but were, or should be, endowed with those gifts and graces which were necessary to qualify them. Now, as the Messiah was to sustain, not only one, but all of those offices in his one person, he was also and especially to be set apart for them by an unction, and was, therefore, called the Messiah, the Christ, the Anointed. But as he was to sustain these offices in a superior sense to that in which any others had sustained them, viz. in a spiritual sense, and to an infinitely greater extent, so his unction must be of a superior kind, and must produce infinitely greater effects. In short, as the ancient prophets, priests, and kings were but types of him, and the offices they sustained but shadows of his offices, so their unction was but a figure of his. He who is “fairer than the children of men,” all whose “garments’ smell of

myrrh, and aloes, and cassia," whose "throne is for ever and ever," the "sceptre of whose kingdom is a right sceptre," who loveth righteousness and hateth iniquity," must have "grace poured upon his lips," and be "anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows." "The Lord God, who created the heavens and the earth," who called him in righteousness, as his servant whom he upholds, as his elect in whom he delighteth, must "put his Spirit upon him, that he may bring forth judgment to the Gentiles." (Isai. xlii. 1.) "The Spirit of the Lord God" must be "upon him," and hereby the Lord must "anoint him to preach good tidings unto the meek," &c. (Isai. lxi. 1.) The Spirit of Jehovah "must rest upon him; the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord." (Isai. xi 2.) And this Spirit he must have "without measure," and in him must "all fulness dwell," that he may be qualified for his great undertaking, and that "out of his fulness" his disciples, subjects, and servants "may receive and grace for grace." — —

Now Jesus of Nazareth is this Messiah, having exactly fulfilled in himself all the prophecies uttered of the Messiah, and answered all the types, *e. g.* Was it foretold that the Messiah should be the seed of the woman, the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Judah, and of the family of David? Jesus was such. Was he to be born of a virgin, and in the city of Bethlehem? So was Jesus. Was he to be poor and despised, to "grow up as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground," &c.? This was the case with Jesus. In this manner we might proceed to show, how all that was foretold of the Messiah was accomplished in him; as to his doc-

trine, (Isai. lxi. 1—3; l. 4;) his miracles, (Isai. xxxv. 4—6;) his resurrection, ascension, intercession, &c.; his prophetic, priestly, and kingly offices; the success of his Gospel; and the punishment which should come upon those that rejected him. (Isai. lii. 13, 15; liii. 10—12, &c. Ps. xvi. lxxii. cx., &c.)—*Jesus* answers to the Hebrew *Joshua*, or *Jehoshua*, and signifies “he shall save,” or Jehovah shall save by him. — —

“Came into the world.” Hence it is to be inferred, that he existed before he came, otherwise the expression is very improper: he was “before Abraham;” (John viii. 58;) “before all things;” (Col. i. 17;) “from everlasting.” (Mic. v. 2.)—How did he come into the world? Not as an angel has come, but he “was made flesh.” (John i. 14; Heb. ii. 14.) Hence he emptied himself of his honour and glory, as the Son of God, “took upon him the form of a servant,” &c. (Phil. ii. 6, 7.)—How was he accommodated and treated when he came? Was a palace provided for his reception? a guard of servants, and suitable equipage and honours? Alas! quite the reverse. Poverty, meanness, persecution, every conceivable indignity, were his lot. But why so? Was he of mean rank? of small ability? of little authority? of bad character? The reverse in all respects. But was he an enemy to mankind? came he into the world with an hostile and mischievous intention? comest thou peaceably? Surely peaceably, being the Prince of peace, the friend, the lover, the benefactor, the Saviour of mankind; of the meanest, the vilest, and the worst. To save sinners, enemies, rebels. — — This brings us to consider,

II. THE END OF HIS COMING.

“To save sinners.” Such are the objects of his divine commission; “not the righteous, but sinners;” not “the whole, but the sick;” “the lost;” nevertheless, he came to save all. (John iii. 17.) He is “the Saviour of *all men*,” (1 Tim. iv. 10.) Therefore *all* are sinners; (Rom. iii. 23;) ignorant, guilty, depraved, weak, and miserable.—He came not to condemn. (John iii. 17,) although we were so deserving of condemnation, but to *save*. Hear this, ye sinners! Hear it ye, the vilest of men, for the Gospel is addressed to such. (See ver. 13, 14.) Not to save men *in*, but “from their sins;” to give them a present salvation, preparatory to a future salvation. (Matt. i. 21.)—In respect of the nature of this salvation: it implies,—illumination from darkness, from ignorance and error, into the light of knowledge and truth. (Eph. v. 8; 1 Pet. ii. 9; Tit. iii. 3.) How great our ignorance of divine things by nature, and till supernaturally enlightened! (1 Cor. ii. 14; Acts xxvi. 18; Eph. iv. 18.)—Justification. He saves from guilt, condemnation, and wrath, into the favour and family of God. (Eph. i. 6, 7; Col. i. 13, 14; Tit. iii. 7; Rom. viii. 1; Gal. iv. 4; John i. 12.)—Regeneration and entire sanctification, (Tit. iii. 4—6; ii. 14,) including power over sin; (Rom. vi. 14;) deliverance from it; (Eph. v. 25, 27;) and a restoration to the Divine image. (Eph. iv. 22—24; 2 Pet. i. 4)—Peace and consolation. He saves from misery to happiness. Misery must be the companion of a man, while under the guilt and power of sin, the displeasure of God, an accusing conscience, foreboding fears of death and judgment, the slavery of his lusts and passions; and this happiness is consequent

upon peace with God, peace of mind, the love of God and of all mankind “shed abroad in the heart,” an hope of immortality, and the consolation of God’s Spirit.—Glorification. He came to save sinners from all the consequences of sin, from death spiritual, temporal, and eternal, into spiritual and eternal life.

III. THE CONNEXION BETWEEN THE COMING OF CHRIST, AND THE END PROPOSED THEREBY;

Or, how the coming of Christ into the world, was necessary, or subservient, to the salvation of sinners. Coming into the world, he teaches men by his doctrine and example, shows us the certainty and importance of his doctrine by his miracles, and enlightens our minds by his Spirit. (Isai. xlii. 6, 7; 1x. 1; Luke i. 78, 79.)—Offering up his body as a sacrifice, he makes atonement for sin, satisfies the demands of the law, and procures for us an everlasting righteousness. (Heb. x. 5—7; Rom. x. 4; 2 Cor. v. 21.) And thus we have salvation from guilt, into favour with God; his friendship, and communion with him.—Rising and ascending, he receives the Spirit, the purchase of his merits; and hence we have salvation from depravity and weakness, into the image and nature of God. (Psal. lxxviii. 18; Acts ii. 33.)—Seated at God’s right hand, and ever living to intercede for us, he compassionates our ignorance, weakness, and misery, and sends direction, help, and comfort, making all things work for our good.

[Here should be considered the nature and necessity of faith, the grand means of salvation. (Eph. ii. 8, 9.) And hence we have love and obedience, a proof of present, and the way to future salvation. (Heb. v. 9.)] —

INFER,

The great condescension and love of Christ towards sinners.—How certainly the vilest and worst, the guiltiest and filthiest, may be saved. As the pre-existent Word and Son of God, and as the Messiah anointed with the Spirit, “without measure,” he is able: as a suffering, dying man, he is willing.—How guilty are they, of whatever difference of character, whether Pharisees or Antinomians, that will not be saved by him! As to the causes of their unwillingness; they love darkness rather than light, and sin rather than holiness, and the world rather than God.—The necessity of faith in him, and of applying to him as the Saviour.—The firm foundation laid for this, and the inducement we have to build thereon. It is “a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance.”

[The preacher should enlarge on the certain truth, deep importance, and perfect suitableness of this salvation to all; and apply it to different cases.] — —

CCIII.

CHRISTIANS COMMANDED TO PRAY FOR
KINGS AND CIVIL MAGISTRATES.

1 TIMOTHY ii. 1—3.

I exhort, therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour.

THESE words, as you perceive, contain an inference drawn from the principles laid down in the preceding verses. And, surely, never were principles more certain and important, or an inference of greater consequence, or more fairly drawn. The principles are two. The first is an indisputable matter of fact; that Saul, “a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious” to the cause of God and his people, “obtained mercy,” in order that in him “Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to everlasting life.” The second principle is an important doctrine, closely connected with that fact, that “it is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” Now, from these premises the Apostle justly infers, “that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks should be made for all men,” &c. From these words we learn,

I. THAT A GREAT AND CHIEF END OF CIVIL GOVERNMENT IS, THAT MEN, REAL CHRISTIANS IN PARTICULAR, “MAY LEAD QUIET AND PEACEABLE LIVES IN ALL GODLINESS AND HONESTY.”

That civil government is an ordinance of God, will be admitted by every believer in the Gospel. Disordered as this fallen world is, it must be evident to every considerate mind, that it would be unspeakably more so, if there were no ruling power, to be “a terror to evil doers,” restraining them from the commission of crimes by a fear of punishment, “and a praise” and encouragement “to those that do well.” Indeed without it there could be no civil society, but men would live almost like wild beasts, in continual rapine and slaughter, destroying and destroyed, till they were “consumed one of another.” Under such circumstances, almost any form of civil government is a blessing, and the ruler is a “minister of God for good.” St. Paul affirms this even of Nero, perhaps the worst tyrant that ever existed.—And not only is civil government an institution of God, but that particular form of it which obtains in any country, subsists through the providence of God, as a comfort or a chastisement. Nay, and the persons that are in office, as kings, &c. are in office, not by chance, but the appointment of God. (See Rom. xiii. 1.)—But what is the chief end for which government is instituted? And what is the great advantage to be derived from it? I have already intimated, that it is to preserve order in the community, by restraining wicked and unreasonable men from the commission of crimes, and particularly those against the peace of society, as fraud, violence, oppression, cruelty, theft,

murder. Thus mankind, being protected in the possession of their lives, liberties, and property, may live without fear of one another, and may pursue their callings with industry and diligence, and provide for themselves, and such as are dependent on them.—It is considered a further good arising from government, when rulers encourage and promote manufactures, trade, commerce, and by these means bring much wealth into a nation. And if, added to this, they also encourage and promote arts, sciences, literature, it may be thought a greater blessing still, as giving more wisdom and respectability, and therefore weight and influence, to a country. — —

With these opinions I am not disposed to differ. All these things are of importance; yet they are all of a mere temporal and worldly nature, and pass away with the world. Perhaps you will say: And so also will all the governments of this world pass away with it. True: but the effects of them, and their influence on the moral, spiritual, and eternal interests of their subjects, do not pass away. The effects of the government of David, Solomon, Hezekiah, Josiah, and many others, will exist to all eternity. Kings and rulers, &c. are rational and immortal beings, and are appointed to direct and govern rational and immortal beings, and should have in view their own interest and that of their subjects in another and better world. They should have in view, as the great end of the authority vested in them, what the Apostle here states to be its great end, the *godliness and honesty* of their subjects, and that such especially as are godly and honest, should live “quiet and peaceable lives.”—That their subjects should be possessed of the knowledge, fear, and love of God, and should serve

him in truth and righteousness, as the only sure foundation for honesty to man, (σεμνοτης,) gravity, seriousness. Such are, and will always be, the best subjects. Kings and governors should therefore provide, as far as possible,—that their subjects may be religious; should countenance godliness and honesty by their own example, in attending divine worship, &c.; by their public acts; by regarding and encouraging such as are godly in preference to others; by promoting and preferring them to such departments as they may appear qualified to fill.—That such as live godly and honestly may “lead quiet lives,” unmolested and secure, not only from every foreign enemy, from any internal insurrection and commotion, but from every kind and degree of persecution by the officers of the civil establishment themselves, and by all the enemies of God and religion, high or low. This, I rejoice to say, our good king has done. “And peaceable.”—Not only in peace with God, and with one another, but with their neighbours, and may have no hinderance, nor interruption in their exercises of piety and virtue, nor in their endeavours to enlighten, reform, and bless mankind. The whole history of the Old Testament shows that the civil institutions of the Jews, which were of divine appointment, were adapted to the support of religion. The state was for the benefit of the church. — —

II. THAT IT IS OUR DUTY TO PRAY FOR KINGS, THAT THIS END OF THEIR GOVERNMENT MAY BE ANSWERED; AND, IF IT IS ANSWERED, TO GIVE THANKS.

When instead of giving it support, magistrates neglect religion themselves, or discountenance and persecute it in others, it may be owing to their ignorance of

religion, of its nature, or of its importance; of the persons who really possess it, how much more valuable and better subjects they are than others; to their own wickedness and enmity to religion; to the prejudices which they have imbibed against religion and religious persons, through wrong information; to undue respect for, or fear of, such of their subjects, especially of the higher classes, as are hostile to religion. Now we must pray, that these things may be removed. The Jews and first christians prayed for their rulers. The Jews at Babylon were commanded to "seek the peace of the city whither they were carried away captives, and to pray unto the Lord for it." (Jer. xxix. 7, 8. See the order of Darius, Ezra vi. 10.) This was the case with the first christians, as we learn from Polycarp, Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Cyprian, Origen, Lactantius, and was proper, that the heathen emperors, finding the christians solicitous for the welfare of the government, might show them kindness. Kings do peculiarly want the prayers of God's people, being exposed to many difficulties and snares in their high station. We should offer (*δέξεις*) *supplications*, for the averting of evils, deprecating divine judgments; (*προσέχας*) *prayers*, for the obtaining of good, all spiritual and temporal blessings; (*ἐντετεύξεις*) *intercessions*, for others.—When kings, &c. do their duty, and afford to their subjects countenance, encouragement, &c. to godliness, and afford them religious liberty, there should be "*giving of thanks.*" For it is God who, of his grace and goodness to his own people, supports the power of the magistrates, who has set such rulers over them, and has raised them to their present power and dignity; who has given them the discernment and good dispositions which they possess; who enables

them to withstand the many temptations to the contrary with which they are surrounded, and all this out of love to his church and people. [Here may be mentioned the privileges of the people of God in this nation.]

III. THE REASON WHY THESE THINGS SHOULD BE DONE.

It is good, (*καλον*,) *reasonable*, that people should be godly and honest, quiet and peaceable, and should pray for their rulers; it is amiable and excellent, that while piety and peace are united, kings and their subjects should be united, and thus act in harmony for the general good; it is good for magistrates and for their subjects, whether the people of God or of the world, that it should be so. It is acceptable to God, because he “willeth all men to be saved,” not only from oppression and persecution, and enjoy protection on earth, but saved eternally; for he is “one God,” one common parent of the whole human race, who cannot possibly be partial, but must be concerned for the present and eternal welfare of all his offspring; there is also “one mediator,” appointed by him, who has taken on him the one common nature of all men; this mediator has “given himself a ransom for all,” which not only shows that he willeth the salvation of all, but that he willeth it more than he willeth any thing else, having not bought any thing else so dear. (1 Cor. vi. 20; 1 Pet. i. 19.)—Now as God wills the salvation of all; so, in order thereto, he desireth “that all should come to the knowledge of the truth” as “it is in Jesus,” as the only means of salvation. He, therefore, willeth that no obstruction should be placed in the way of our receiving the truth, or adhering to it, or improvement of it, as by persecu-

tion, but that they should have every encouragement to believe, love, embrace, experience and practice it. And this he willeth, for the sake of the ungodly world, that they may be brought to repentance and faith, and may become godly and honest; for the sake of the *godly*, that they may persevere, and not “draw back unto perdition,” but may make progress in grace, in holiness and usefulness, and receive a full reward; for his own glory, and the glory of the Son and the Holy Ghost. — —

CCIV.

THE GREAT MYSTERY OF GODLINESS.

1 TIMOTHY iii. 16.

*God was manifest in the flesh. justified in the Spirit,
seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on
in the world, received up into glory.*

IN the preceding verses, we find St. Paul directing Timothy, whom he had left at Ephesus, to superintend the church there, respecting the character and qualifications of those whom he should ordain, both as bishops to oversee and feed the flock of Christ, and as deacons to be entrusted with the care of their temporal concerns. After which, he says, “These things I write, hoping to come to thee shortly; but if I tarry long,” being hindered by any unexpected occurrence, I send these instructions, “that thou may knowest how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God,” in which he vouchsafes his presence, and is worshipped in spirit and truth by his believing people: “the pillar and ground,”

or support, "of the truth," for it is the means of preserving the knowledge and practice of the whole system of Gospel truth. And to show the great importance of the truth, the Apostle adds, "Without controversy, great is the mystery," &c. I shall consider these grand articles of "the mystery of godliness," in the order in which they are here presented to our notice.

I. GOD WAS MANIFEST IN THE FLESH.

Observe who was "manifest in the flesh?" God. But does not the Apostle mean, a god? No: for though there are that are called gods," (1 Cor. viii. 5,) yet, properly speaking, the Holy Scriptures acknowledge no God but one. It is true, there is a passage in the Psalms, in which magistrates are called gods, as invested with a portion of God's authority, and being delegated by him; "I said, ye are gods;" (Ps. lxxxii. 6;) but in that passage they are sufficiently distinguished from the true God, by being termed his children, and said to "die like men." The Scriptures never speak of any inferior God.—"God" here means, "the Word, that was in the beginning with God, and was God." was incarnated (John i. 14) in the human nature of Jesus, conceived by a miracle in the womb of the virgin, and born of her, to whom the divine names of *God*, *Lord*, *Jehovah* are repeatedly given in the Scriptures; as also the divine titles of the "true God," (1 John v. 20;) "God over all, blessed for ever," (Rom. ix. 5;) "Jehovah of hosts," (Isai. viii. 13, 14; Hos. xii. 5;) "the Lord of glory," (1 Cor. ii. 8;) "the Holy One and Just," and "the Prince of life;" (Acts iii. 14, 15;) "the First and the Last." (Rev. i. 17.) To him divine attributes are ascribed; omnipresence, (Matt. xviii. 20;)

omnipotence, (Phil. iii. 21;) omniscience, (Rev. ii. 23.) And divine works, viz. those of creation, (John i. 3;) preservation, (Col. i. 17; Heb. i. 3;) redemption and salvation, (*passim*.) judging all mankind at the last day. (Matt. xxv. 31, &c.) And to him divine worship was often paid by divinely-inspired persons, who could not be mistaken, particularly in a matter so momentous.—How far his Deity “was manifest,” (*εφανερωθη*,) *manifested*, before he entered on his public ministry we know not; on this the Scriptures are silent. But when he entered on it, his Divine glory frequently broke forth through the veil of his humanity, especially in his discourses; not only in the matter, but in the manner of his teaching; not only in the wisdom, but in the authority of his doctrine. He uniformly spoke as the eternal Lawgiver. “*Ye have heard that it hath been said,—But I say unto you.*”—(Matt. v. 21—40.) This was not the manner of Moses or the prophets, but, “*Thus saith the Lord.*”—Again “*I am the way, the truth, and the life.*” (John xvi. 6.) “*I am the resurrection and the life.*” (John xi. 25.) “*I am the good Shepherd.*” (John x. 11.) “*Before Abraham was, I am.*” (John viii. 58.) &c. In the power of his miracles, and especially in his manner of doing them, with authority and majesty. “*I will, be thou clean.*” (Matt. viii. 3.) “*Damsel, I say unto thee, Arise.*” (Mark v. 41.) “*Peace, be still.*” (Mark iv. 39.) “*Lazarus, come forth.*” (John xi. 43.) If some of the Apostles performed any miracles, as great, or greater, than his, yet they never did them in that manner, with that authority and majesty. In the holiness of his spotless life, holiness more than human, or angelic. In his unspeakable and never-ceasing benevolence, beneficence, and

other divine virtues; his love far exceeded that of any mere creature. In a peculiar manner, when he was transfigured on the holy mount. (2 Pet. i. 16, 17.) And in his resurrection from the dead, which showed him to be the Prince of life, "the Son of God with power." (Rom. i. 4.)—

II. JUSTIFIED IN THE SPIRIT.

The Lord Jesus appeared on earth in all the infirmity and frailty of mortal flesh; he was poor, despised, persecuted, and at last put to death as a blasphemer; yet he professed and maintained a high claim, the highest possible, even that of being the Messiah, the Son of God, in a peculiar sense, and one with his Father. (John viii. 58; x. 30, 36.) Now how could he be justified in making this claim? He "was justified in," or rather, *by*, "the Spirit." This means not his human spirit or soul, but the Holy Ghost. That Spirit had moved holy men of old (2 Pet. i. 21) to deliver many predictions concerning him, which were all exactly fulfilled in him. The Spirit descended upon him in a visible form at his baptism, and pointed him out as the person whom the voice from heaven declared to be God's beloved Son:" and this Spirit he possessed without measure in his gifts and graces, as his doctrine, life, and miracles showed. By this Spirit he was raised from the dead, (1 Pet. iii. 18,) and thereby powerfully demonstrated to be the Son of God. (Rom. i. 4.) He baptised his disciples with this Spirit, particularly on the day of Pentecost, according to the prediction of the Baptist, (Matt. iii. 11,) and his own repeated promise; and thus convinced of sin those that did not believe in him, whether Jews or Gentiles, showed them to be in-

excusable in resisting such evidence, and, at the same time, gave full proof that he himself was righteous. (John xvi. 7—10.) — —

III. SEEN OF ANGELS.

However regardless men might be of this astonishing event, this manifestation of God in the flesh, the angels viewed it with deep and constant attention, and great interest, as a most astonishing and instructive spectacle, being more mysterious than any work of creation, or dispensation of Providence, with which they were acquainted, and giving them such views of their Maker's justice and grace, and especially of his love, as they had not before obtained. (1 Pet. i. 12.) Though the Deity, inhabiting the humanity, was not noticed by men, (as the Apostle seems to intimate,) "it was seen of," or manifested to, "angels." As they attentively observed all the circumstances of his life and death, so they alone saw the Godhead breaking forth, and manifesting its glory in what he said and did. Accordingly, they worshipped him at his entrance into the world, (Heb. i. 6;) celebrated his birth, (Luke ii. 9—13;) ministered to him in the desert, (Matt. iv. 11;) and in his agonies, (Luke xxii. 43;) were present at his resurrection and ascension, (Luke xxiv. 4; Acts i. 10.) — —

IV PREACHED UNTO THE GENTILES.

This also is termed a mystery. (Eph. iii. 4—6; Col. i. 26.) It was long concealed, and when revealed, difficult to be believed, through the prejudices of man. Considering how deeply the heathen world were sunk in idolatry and vice of every kind, God manifested astonishing grace in sending the Gospel to them. Con-

sidering also, that if the Gospel should prevail, among the heathen nations, their philosophy, priesthood, and even governments, as then established, must be overturned, it displayed very extraordinary fortitude in any persons willingly to preach it, and required supernatural and divine power to dispose and enable any, under the certainty of meeting with imprisonment, torture and martyrdom, to undertake such a work: innumerable obstacles seemed to be in the way. But by whom was the Gospel preached? By persons of wealth, power, learning, &c.? no: not in general; but by fishermen and tent-makers: and yet—

***V. BELIEVED ON IN THE WORLD.**

This was a still greater mystery.—That one who had lived in Judea, as a poor, mean, and persecuted man, and was crucified as the vilest malefactor, should be believed on as the Messiah expected by the Jews, and all nations,—as the Son of God, as the Saviour of the world! That his Gospel, so simple and unpromising in appearance, preached without wisdom of words, and unenforced by the authority of human government, or by the rich and great in this world, should be believed in as a revelation from God! It could not be received by men without undermining the heathen idolatry, which had been established and revered for ages, and bringing the most esteemed doctrines of the philosophers into discredit. Hence it would certainly be opposed and persecuted by the three classes of people of the greatest power, the priesthood, the philosophers, and the Roman emperor, with all subordinate kings and magistrates. Whoever believed it were brought under an indispensable obligation to confess it, and whoever did so was in

danger of suffering the loss of all temporal possessions, with imprisonment, torture, and death. But notwithstanding all these obstacles in the way, Jesus and his Gospel were "believed on in the world." —

VI. RECEIVED UP INTO GLORY.

When his ministry on earth was completed, when he had fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies, and answered the ancient types, taught the whole truth belonging to the New Dispensation, and confirmed it by unquestionable miracles; when he had set his followers a perfect example, expiated sin by the sacrifice of himself, overcome the power of death by his resurrection, given his disciples clear proof thereof by appearing to them, and conversing with them, as well as by showing them that the ancient prophets had foretold these things; and when he had given them their commission, and all needful instruction for the discharge of it:—he who had so long tabernacled in our frail nature, in a state of poverty, reproach, and suffering, was "received up into glory;" (Heb. i. 3; iv. 14; viii. 1; Eph. i. 20—23;) that is, as the eternal Son of God, he resumed "the glory he had with the Father before the world was," (John xvii. 5;) his human nature was transformed and glorified; in his complete person, as God-man, he was placed at the head of the whole creation for the good of his church, (Eph. i. 20—22;) was invested with all authority and "power in heaven and earth;" not only made the intercessor and advocate, but the forerunner of his people, having taken possession of glory for them, and being constituted the final judge of men and angels. —

Such are the great principles which *support*, and are

the source of all genuine godliness!—But, they must be understood, at least in a great measure, and believed.—They must be laid to heart, and made the matter of our meditation.—They must influence our spirit and conduct.—They ought especially to produce humility, gratitude, confidence, love, zeal, obedience, resignation, patience, meekness, long-suffering, a heavenly mind, and conformity to God.

CCV.

CAUTION AND ADVICE TO THE RICH.

1 TIMOTHY vi. 17—19.

Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.

As the two epistles to Timothy, and that to Titus, were addressed to persons who were not only christians, and teachers of others, but who held a high and eminent station in the church of Christ, being evangelists, or a kind of itinerant bishops, whose office it was, not so much to superintend and feed the flock of Christ, in different places themselves, as to ordain elders or pastors to do it; and as these epistles were written for the express purpose of showing them “how they ought to behave themselves in the house of God, which is the

church of the living God," so we may well suppose that they contain many most important instructions and directions, with respect to the exercise of their office and ministry. Among these, the injunction just read in your hearing holds a most distinguished place. Many commentators suppose that these words were added to this letter by way of postscript, considering the epistle itself as concluding with the preceding verse. If so, the Apostle must have judged them to be of great moment, and therefore, although he had concluded his letter, and laid down his pen, yet he thought proper to resume it, that he might add an important injunction which he recollected he had omitted. Or perhaps he designedly placed this solemn charge last, and in a postscript, that it might be the more noticed, might strike more powerfully, and leave a more distinct and lasting impression upon the mind of the reader. But I rather think that these words make a part of the body of the epistle, which is not concluded till ver. 21, where we find the usual benediction, "Grace be with thee. Amen." Considered in this light, the connection of the words of my text, with the solemn charge preceding (ver. 13—16) and following, (ver. 20,) fully manifests in what an important point of view they were regarded by the Apostle. Nor is there need to use any arguments to convince you, my brethren, that when the great Apostle of the Gentiles gives this charge to Timothy, he gives it also to every Minister of Christ, in every age and nation. He gives it to me, and commands me, on the peril of disobeying God, by whose authority and inspiration he spoke, to "charge them that are rich, that they be not high-minded," &c. I know not how I can answer it to God, that, having ex-

exercised my ministry among you almost four years, I have not yet, at least in a set and solemn manner, explained to you, and enforced upon you, this apostolic injunction. Nay, I know not how I can answer it to you, to you that are rich, or to you that are poor. To the former, who, perhaps, had you heard this important passage discoursed on at large, and urged upon you, might, through the divine influence, have abounded more in good works, as well as in other respects have become more holy and happy. And to you that are poor, who, perhaps, might thus have received more frequent and effectual relief in your necessities from your richer brethren, and thereby have been excited to greater gratitude, as well as have been enabled to go on your way to the kingdom more comfortably, and to make greater progress therein.—I have, however, this to observe, in excuse for myself in this matter, that although I have not preached expressly on the subject of this charge, I have frequently adverted to it in my discourses, and have not failed to inculcate that liberality to the poor, and those good works, which are here so forcibly recommended. And I trust it is neither too late to discourse more at large, and in a more distinct and pointed manner, on a subject which (to say nothing concerning the connection in which it stands, or of the solemn manner in which it is introduced and concluded) evidently carries its own importance on the face of it.—Inquire we then,

I. TO WHOM THE APOSTLE WOULD HAVE THE CHARGE CONTAINED IN OUR TEXT GIVEN?

“Those that are rich.” But who are these? Princes? Nobles? Merchants? Persons possessed of large and

independent property? Certainly. But not such only. The context shows that persons in very inferior situations and circumstances may, with sufficient propriety, be termed "rich," and are really meant by the Apostle. Speaking (ver. 5, 6) of some whom he terms "men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth," who "supposed that gain was godliness," he adds, "but godliness with contentment is great gain." Here the Apostle evidently opposes those who have only "food and raiment," or food and *coverings*, for the original, (*σχεπασματα*) includes not only clothes, but an habitation, to such as are rich. All, therefore, that have more than these necessities of life, that have food and coverings for the body, that have at least wholesome food in a quantity sufficient, and warm and decent raiment, and a needful habitation, and something over, whatever it may be, are rich in the Apostle's sense. This is the true light in which this matter is to be stated. Nor does it very materially alter the case from whatsoever source they derive their wealth, whether from estates, money at interest, from any trade or employment, or even from manual labour; still, if they have these necessities, and something over, they must be denominated rich. Here, and here only, can we draw the line between the rich and the poor.—It appears by this, that people may be rich in a thousand different degrees. — —

"Rich in this world:" this visible and temporal world. This is not added without good reason. The Apostle not only intended to intimate, that a person who is rich in this world, may be poor in another; but to suggest an argument or arguments, why the advice he was about to give should be taken. "In this world;"

as if he had said, which is passing away from them, and they from it; where they are but strangers and pilgrims; where their stay is very short and uncertain, and yet infinitely important, since their condition to all eternity depends on it; where they are placed on a stage for action, between “upper, nether, and surrounding worlds,” and are “compassed about with a great cloud of witnesses” of their conduct, many eyes being upon them; where they are on their trial for eternity, and where the riches they possess are entrusted with them as an important talent, to be improved. — —

The Apostle speaks of those that are “rich in this world” with possessions very different from those that are spiritual and eternal: with possessions or riches, which are unsatisfying, uncertain, transitory, and ensnaring, (ver. 9, 10,) called by the very heathen, *irritamenta malorum*, “provocations to evil;” and who, speaking of money, termed it, *ferroque nocentius aurum*, “more destructive than iron,” or “the sword;” which cannot be possessed without great danger, (Mat. xix. 23; Mark x. 23—27.)—But which, nevertheless, need not be thrown into the next sea, as the heathen poet advised,

In mare proximum,
Summi materiem mali,

because they are (I speak of money) not only a convenient medium of commerce, and a means of reciprocal good offices, but are capable of being employed to an excellent purpose, and of doing great and durable good to the bodies and even souls of men, by ministering to our wants and the wants of others, by enabling us to pass more comfortably and usefully through life; to be-

come, as it were, eyes to the blind, feet to the lame, health to the sick, food to the hungry, liberty to the captive; to be instead of an husband to the widow, a father to the fatherless, a friend to the friendless;— which are entrusted to our management as stewards, for most important purposes, but which, it is possible, we may abuse, and make the occasion of pride, of the love of the world in all its forms, of alienation from, and forgetfulness of God, of disobedience to him, and enmity against him; of lust, of luxury, of anger, of malice, of envy, of revenge, of strife and contention, of injustice, oppression. cruelty, wars, slaughter, murder, and death; yea, may become, through the love of them, “the root of all evil:” insomuch, that while we pursue them, and “will be rich,” we may “err from the faith, and pierce ourselves through with many sorrows;” (ver. 10;) nay, and may “fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.” (Ver. 9.) Hence,

II. THE APOSTLE’S CAUTION AND ADVICE.

“That they be not high-minded.” The Apostle admonishes us of the evils into which the rich are most prone to fall, as pride or high-mindedness. The rich are ready to “sacrifice to their own net,” as the Scripture speaks, to ascribe their acquired riches to their own industry or economy; to say in their heart, “My hand hath gotten me this wealth.” Riches procure those conveniences and elegancies of dress, furniture, equipage, attendance, &c., which nourish pride, because they attract the attention and admiration of others; and nothing tends more to generate pride than the honour that cometh of men: many will think us better because

we are richer, and perhaps we may be disposed to think ourselves so. The rich are usually commended; by some in their simplicity, with an intention to encourage what is good, but by others with a design to serve themselves of them: this will beget high-mindedness, for we are too ready to suppose we deserve the commendation which we receive. Again: riches, by placing some men above others, preclude that freedom of conversation whereby they might be made sensible of their faults, and brought to know themselves; hence they but seldom meet with a faithful friend who will deal plainly with them, and “they grow grey in their faults,” as a great divine says, and die “with all their imperfections on their heads.” Wealth procures respect, and gives increased weight and influence to all we say and do; and how natural is it for a man to think highly of himself, when he sees every one else yield deference to him.—Well did the Apostle know these things, and therefore deliver the caution of the text. As if he had said, Remind them that God seeth not as man seeth; that he esteems no man for what he possesses, or for any advantages procured by wealth. Caution them against thinking themselves wiser or better for these things; advise them to weigh themselves in another balance, to estimate their worth only by the true riches, that is, by their love to God and man, &c., the treasures of grace, which, if, with their other advantages, they do not possess, they are more miserable, more vile and contemptible, than the lowest servant under their roof, or than the beggar laid at their “gate full of sores.” Above all, show them that they are not proprietors—only stewards of what they possess, and are accountable for the manner in which they use every part of

and instead of being highminded, let them fear and tremble, lest they should be unfaithful stewards of the "mammon of unrighteousness," and lest, abusing their talent, which might be improved for good to themselves and others, they should meet with condemnation and punishment from that sovereign Lord, who will shortly say, "Give an account of thy stewardship." —

The second branch of the caution is, that they do not "trust in uncertain riches."—As riches are a temptation to high-mindedness, so also to idolatry, one branch of which is, to put that trust in the creature which ought to be placed in God only; we see that, according to the ordinary course of things, riches procure for us the necessities and conveniences of life, as food, clothing, &c., that they may be a mean of procuring medicine and health, when we are sick, &c., and in many ways tend to render human life more comfortable. Hence we are wont to trust in them, for the relief, support, and comfort, which they cannot procure. But we should remember that they cannot even supply our ordinary and most necessary wants, any further than God permits: that in cases innumerable, as in famine, pestilence, shipwreck, incurable disease, the death of those we love, &c., they afford no help. If a wife, a child, a friend, become a breathless corpse, can riches animate the cold clay, or recall its departed spirit? Can they drive away the fever, the gout, the consumption, or any of the innumerable maladies to which our flesh is subject? Can they ward off the stroke of death? or lessen any of the pains of dissolving nature? Can they support us at that trying time, or open to us a prospect beyond the grave? Can they accompany us into the other world, or minister to our comfort there? O no!

quite the reverse of all this. They increase the love of life, and, therefore, the fear of death: they render us reluctant to leave a world where we have so many good things, and where our heart and treasure are.—Can they then, make us happy? or, have we reason to trust in them for happiness? Alas! By increasing our attachment to the world, they increase our care and anxiety about it, and cause us to feel more sensibly any loss, reproach, or disaster we meet with. And by increasing our irregular and inordinate desires, “the desire of the flesh, of the eye, and the pride of life,” with all those “lusts that war in our members,” they militate against our peace and tranquility of mind, against our confidence in God, a hope of immortality, love to his name, resignation to his will, patience under the dispensations of Providence, contentment in all states, meekness amidst provocations, &c. and therefore against our happiness even in this present world. And if they cannot accompany us into eternity, and if “they that have riches shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven,”—nay, and if it be “easier for a camel to go through a needle’s eye than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God,” surely we have no reason to trust in them for happiness hereafter.—Add to this, that they are “uncertain,” (*πλυστου αδηλοτητι*), and transitory: “they take to themselves wings, and fly away;” they are in frequent fluctuation, continually changing their owners, so that we are not sure of keeping them a day to an end: and at last, they certainly pass from us, or we from them.—Trust not then for relief, for help, or happiness, “in uncertain riches, but in the living God,” His wisdom, power, love, mercy, faithfulness, are all infinite. He is a faithful Creator, a patient

Preserver, a liberal Benefactor, a most gracious Redeemer, an almighty Saviour, a constant Friend and loving Father, to all that trust in him. Trust in him for direction in difficulties, protection in dangers, (Ps. xci.) support in pain and weakness, succour in temptations, comfort in troubles, life, yea everlasting life, in death, for "all things pertaining to life and godliness;" (2 Pet. i. 3; 1 Tim. iv. 8; vi. 17;) things needful, and useful, for a relish of them, and power to enjoy them, and to make these streams of good lead us to himself the fountain; for grace, and the means of grace, here, and his kingdom and glory hereafter; a satisfying, certain, and durable portion. —

This brings me to the third branch of the change. "That they do good." For trusting in him for all we want, and not in riches, we need not neglect any present opportunity put into our hands for doing good, in order to lay up our money for the time to come. We must "*do good*;" but, to whom? To all men, saints or sinners, professors or profane, friends or enemies, "especially the household of faith."—How? To their bodies, by supplying them as Providence enables us with food when hungry; raiment, if naked; medicine, if sick;—to their souls, by affording them instruction, if ignorant; reproof, if wicked; comfort, if distressed.

Thus we are called, as christians, to manifest our faith, which "without works is dead;" (Jam. ii. 26;) our hope, of a future reward (1 Cor. xv. 58; Gal. vi. 9; Heb. vi. 11;) our love to God and man, (1 John iii. 16, 17;) our obedience, God having commanded it,—thus to answer the end of our creation, preservation, (Matt. iii. 10; Luke xiii. 6—9;) redemption, (Tit. ii. 14; 2

Cor. v. 14, 15;) illumination, (Col. i. 9, 10;) justification, (Tit. iii. 8;) regeneration, (Eph. ii. 10;) sanctification, (Tit. ii. 14;) if we have indeed obtained these benefits. — —

“That they be rich in good works.”—That they perform them—frequently, embracing every opportunity, and letting none slip.—Constantly, for we must, (*καὶ ὑπομονὴν ἐργᾶς ἀγαθῆς,*) “by patient *continuance in well-doing* seek for glory, honour, and immortality.” (Rom. ii. 7.)—Abundantly, according to the power and ability which God giveth; we must make this the only measure of our doing good, not any beggarly maxims or customs of this world. If you have much, give plenteously; “freely you have received. freely give.” — —

“Ready to distribute.” Do not think it enough to do good in other ways, as by the use of your time, knowledge, influence, authority, advice, example; which, in some degree, you may do while you are of the world, and covetous; but by distributing your money, and that to every one according to his necessity. “Disperse abroad, and give to the poor,” and let “the blessing of him that is ready to perish come upon you.” To be “*ready*” to do this; “ready to do every good work,” (Tit. ii. 1,) implies that by the use of previous thought, contrivance, industry, economy, frugality, we be prepared for acts of charity; that we attain the necessary knowledge, prudence, and grace, whereby we may be furnished, “thoroughly furnished, unto all good works;”, may have what to give on all proper occasions, and a heart to give.—Hence the Apostle adds,

“Willing to communicate.” To communicate willingly and cheerfully, “for the Lord loveth a cheerful giver.” The original here, (*κοινωνικὸς εἶναι,*) implies, to

“be of the same spirit,” says Wesley, “though not in the same outward state, with those believers of ancient time, who continued steadfastly in the Apostle’s doctrine, and (τη κοινωνία,) fellowship,” wherein “none said that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.”—(Comp. Acts. ii. 42—45; and iv. 32.)—Or, it implies, to be a steward, a faithful and wise steward of God for the poor; from whom we may consider ourselves as differing in those two points, that our wants may be first supplied out of that portion of our Lord’s goods which are placed in our hands; and that we have the blessedness of giving to them. — —

III. THE HAPPY CONSEQUENCES OF FOLLOWING THIS ADVICE.

It is the sure, and the only sure way, to be rich, and that for time and eternity. “To be rich in good works.” “Laying up,” (αποθησαυριζοντας,) *treasuring up* to “themselves a good foundation for the time to come.” The chief, the great foundation on which we must build our hope and dependance for the blessings of God, whether temporal or eternal, is doubtless the Lord Jesus Christ: his obedience unto death; his mediation; the mercy and the promises of God, through him, embraced and appropriated by faith. But through the merits of Christ, whatever we do in his name, and by faith in him, and love to God and man, is a foundation and reason, in consequence of God’s promises, for expecting good at the hands of God, both here and hereafter.—Here: “for the time to come;” (εις το μελλον;) *i. e.*—for the future part of life, as a continuance of ability to do good, according to these promises, “To

him that hath shall be given:" "Every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth, that it may *bring forth* more fruit;" likewise direction, help, and comfort; (Isai. lviii. 7—11;) the testimony of a good conscience, which is a continual feast; a well-grounded and lively hope of eternal life; (Matt. vii. 21; Rev. xxii. 14;) consolation and support in sickness and death. (Ps. xli. 1)—Hereafter, as appears from Heb. vi. 10; xiii. 16; Gal. vi. 6, 7, 9; Rev. xxii. 12; Rom. ii. 7 The reward, which is sure, shall also be abundant. It is the joy, the glory, the unsearchable riches of our Lord; "all things." (Rev. xxi. 7.) It will be in exact proportion to our works. (2 Cor. ix. 6, 7.) There is no other way of laying hold, really and firmly, of eternal life: for though it be God's free gift, (Rom. vi. 23,) and is received only through Christ, and by faith in him; yet our faith must work, as we have ability and opportunity; otherwise it is *dead*, and our religion is a mere pretence. — —

CCVI.

LIFE AND IMMORTALITY DISCOVERED.

2 TIMOTHY i. 10.

—*Who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel.*

AMONG the great and wonderful things performed by the Son of God for our fallen race, and among the many invaluable privileges he has obtained for us, those recorded in these words are certainly the most extraordinary and beneficial. "He hath abolished death;" this

is the achievement of his own wonder-working love and power. "He hath brought life and immortality to light;" this is the blessing conferred by his matchless grace. But are these things properly considered, and laid to heart, by those for whose benefit they are intended? Are they understood? I fear not; at least with a living faith. Otherwise they would raise us above the fear of death; they would inspire us with lively and joyful hopes of immortal life. They would raise our thoughts and affections to the eternal and glorious state that is before us, and cause us to desire, and look for that "better country," so that we should greatly prefer the cross of Christ, and to "suffer affliction with the people of God," to the enjoyment of "the pleasures of sin for a season," because we should have "respect to the recompense of reward."—Permit me, therefore, to call your serious attention to this subject; a subject, certainly, full of instruction and consolation, if it be understood and believed aright; and we may proceed to the subject with advantage, if we first consider the connection of the text with the context. — — We inquire,

I. WHOM DOES THE APOSTLE CHIEFLY RESPECT?
OR, WITH REGARD TO WHOM HAS CHRIST ABOLISHED DEATH?

In some sense, this respects all men, for whom Christ hath obtained, by his death and resurrection, a resurrection from the dead, and the offer of a future and immortal state; to whom he hath revealed these things by his Gospel, which is commanded to be "preached to every creature." (Mark xvi. 16.) See Isai. xxv. 6—9.

It especially belongs to those who, by faith, have an interest in Christ, and union with him, and are his true followers. To these the promise of life is made; (ver. 1; John xi. 25, 26; xx. 31; 1 John v. 11—13; John vi. 40, 47, 50; x. 27, 28;) these are saved, and “called with a holy calling,” (ver. 9;) and these have committed their souls and bodies, their whole persons, and all to him, (ver. 12,) and are persuaded that “he is able to keep that they have committed to him against the great day.” — —

II. IN WHAT SENSE HAS HE ABOLISHED DEATH WITH RESPECT TO SUCH?

He has abolished,—“the sting of it,” viz. “sin.” (1 Cor. xv. 56.) He has atoned for it, has expiated its guilt, and removed the condemnation, curse, and wrath due to it, with regard to all such; who have redemption through his blood the forgiveness of sins.” (Eph. i. 7; Acts xiii. 38; Rom. v. 1, 9, 10; viii. 1.) He has shown how it must be crucified, (Rom. vi. 4—6; Gal. ii. 20; vi. 14;) and we must die to it. (1 Pet. ii. 24.) He has purchased grace to enable us so to do; to break its power, and purge away its defilement.—The power of death by his resurrection. He, the Holy One, and prince of life, could not be held in death, (Ps. xvi. 10; Acts ii. 24,) because of his innocence and holiness, death only being due to sinners; because of his supernatural origin, having been conceived miraculously; because of his Deity, or the union of his human nature with the divine. Nor can his members be held under its power. (1 Cor. xv. 23.) He hath taken this strong hold of hell, and it cannot detain us captives; he hath divided Jordan, and we may go through on dry land.

He hath altered the property or nature of death, by his ascension. It was an enemy, putting an end to all our possessions, honours, and joys; nay, to our very existence here on earth; the king of terrors, or an officer from the infernal tyrant, bringing us into the presence of our Judge to be condemned; the iron gate whereby we should have entered the infernal prison. He hath made it a friend, affording us a termination of all our labours and sufferings, and wiping the tears from our eyes; a messenger of peace, who conducts us into the presence-chamber of our heavenly Father and heavenly Husband; the gate of life, of the heavenly city and palace. He hath done all this by rising and ascending to be our Advocate, Intercessor, and Forerunner. — He hath abolished the fear of it by his Gospel and his grace. (Heb. ii. 14, 15.)—By his Gospel. The heathen, by tradition and the light of nature, conceived some hope of a future state, this being indeed necessary, that they might come to God. (Heb. xi. 6.) But this hope was very weak.* As to the resurrection of the body, they knew and believed nothing of it. No wonder they feared death. These things were but obscurely revealed to the Jews; hence their hope was mixed with fear and a spirit of bondage. But we have clear and full information, through the doctrine of Christ, sealed by his blood, his miracles, his resurrection, his ascension, which is an earnest of ours. Hence we have knowledge of the certainty and nature of a future state.—By his grace. *Faith*, by which we have a title to, a fitness for, and a foretaste of it; *hope*, grounded thereon, implying expectation and desire; *love*, making us dead to the world, and willing to leave

* See Note, Vol. IV., page 295.

it, desirous to be with him whom we love and delight in: hence the fear of death is destroyed. — —

He hath abolished death itself, in his foreknowledge and decree, and will abolish it, in fact, by his power, in respect to his believing followers. He will occupy the mediatorial throne till he hath put this “last enemy under his feet,” and death and its effects appear no more but in the lake of fire.” (1 Cor. xv. 21—26; Rev. xx. 14; xxi. 3—7; xxii. 1—5.) — —

III. THE OBLIGATIONS UNDER WHICH WE ARE LAID TO THE LORD JESUS.

They are great indeed for benefits so valuable, so dearly purchased by him.—So freely offered to us, on terms so gracious and suitable to our condition; on the terms of accepting them by repentance and faith. — — —

CCVII.

THE FOUNDATION OF GOD'S CHURCH, AND
THE CHARACTER OF ITS MEMBERS.

2 TIMOTHY ii. 19—21.

Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his: And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work.

IN the preceding context, the Apostle exhorts Timothy, in the strength of Christ, to labour in his sacred calling, with assiduity, courage, and patience, in expectation that his work would be rewarded; he warns him against unprofitable and erroneous doctrines and teachers, and comforts him with the assurance that God would save his true people, and uphold his church, though there would always be found in her, while on earth, persons of very different character and endowments, (ver. 1—21.)—Consider,

I. THE FOUNDATION OF GOD HERE SPOKEN OF.

It is the foundation of God's church which is intended. This is represented as a house, (ver. 20; 1 Tim. iii. 15; 1 Pet. ii. 5,) in which God dwells; (Eph. ii. 22;)

as a family inhabiting a house; (Heb. iii. 3;) as a temple (Eph. ii. 21,) in which God displays his glory, communicates his blessing, receives the prayers, praises, and oblations of his people, and is worshipped "in spirit and in truth."

The foundation of this church is,—the great truth spoken of ver. 8, viz., the resurrection of Christ, being the principal support of the whole fabric of our religion, as manifesting Christ to be the Son of God, (Rom. iv. 25;) obtaining for us the Holy Spirit, (John xvi. 7;) showing the necessity of our rising to a new life; (Rom. vi. 4, 5; Eph. ii. 5, 6;) proving that we shall rise at the great day; that immortality is before us; and that we ought, therefore, to "set our affections on things above," and "seek" them in preference to "things on earth."—The doctrine of our resurrection, through Christ, which is a capital article of christianity, (Heb. vi. 1; 1 Cor. xv. 19, 20;) and all the other fundamental doctrines of the Gospel connected with that of the resurrection of Christ and his people is termed, (Eph. ii. 20,) "the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets;" that is, the foundation laid by them. See also 1 Tim. iii. 15, 16. These doctrines are not only believed by the true people of God, but are the foundation on which they build their confidence and hope for time and for eternity.—Christ himself, in whom all these doctrines are "yea and amen," is the foundation of his church, and of the knowledge, experience, and practice of every individual belonging to it. (1 Cor. iii. 11.) As a Prophet, or Teacher, he is the foundation of all the doctrines of christianity: as a Priest, the foundation of its privileges: as a King, the foundation of its duties. As our wisdom, he is the foundation of our knowledge

of these doctrines; as our righteousness, of our enjoyment of these privileges; as our sanctification, of our performance of these duties; and as our redemption, of our expectation of the promised reward.—This three-fold foundation “standeth sure,” remains immoveable and the same, throughout all ages.—But who build on this foundation? Who are true members of this church, true worshippers in this spiritual temple? This we learn from,

II. THE SEAL, OR INSCRIPTION ON THE FOUNDATION STONE.*

“The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.” A great critic in biblical literature supposes that the Apostle here alludes to Num. xvi. 5; the very words used there in the Septuagint translation, being here quoted by St. Paul; and that the clause has a peculiar reference to the Apostles, in opposition to heretical teachers.—Much has been said of the invisible and visible church of Christ, perhaps not very properly. Christ’s true church is always more or less visible: “the light of the world,” “the salt of the earth,” “a city set upon a hill which cannot be hid.” As, however, it is not always evident to men who are true members of this church, as some are true members who

* The word *σφραγίς* often signifies the mark or impression made by a seal, as well as the seal itself. (Rev. ix. 4.) The expression is here used in allusion to the custom of sometimes engraving on the foundation stones of buildings, the names of the persons by whom, or the purposes for which, the structure was raised.—(Zech. iii. 9.)

are not supposed by men to be such, and others who are thought to be such are not, the distinction is not quite improper or unnecessary. Now here it is explained:—Who are the members of the invisible church? “The Lord knoweth them that are his.” As to the fundamental truth of the resurrection mentioned in the context, they that “confess with their mouth the Lord Jesus,” even when their confessing him might be followed with the loss of all things, and “believe in their heart that God hath raised him from the dead,” (Rom. x. 9, 10,) are the Lord’s people; but who are they? “The Lord knoweth.” They who receive, with a living faith, all the great truths of the Gospel, so as to embrace them, “not in word only, but in power,” &c. (1 Thess. i. 5,) and who build their confidence and hope thereon, are the Lord’s. They who come to Christ, and are built upon him, the foundation laid in Zion, “as lively stones,” to be “a spiritual house,” and to whom “he is precious,” (1 Pet. ii. 4—7,) are the Lord’s. They who see his beauty and his glory in that spiritual temple, his church, of which he is the foundation, and are spiritual worshippers therein: they who having “received Christ,” in all his offices, who “believe” aright “in his name,” and “holding fast their confidence and rejoicing of the hope,” (Heb. iii. 6; John i. 12; Gal. iii. 26—29,) are of his “house” and family. “Abraham’s seed,” “children of God;” are the Lord’s. But who are these?—“The Lord knoweth them that are his;” and he acknowledgeth and maketh it known to themselves, (John x. 14, 27; Gal. iv. 4—6.) And generally, by their fruits others may know them. These, however, have generally been termed the invisible church; for many secret ones known only to the Lord.

are of the number.—But who are the members of the visible church? Why, all that “name the name of Christ” and are called christians; say some. What? when such multitudes of them commit open sin, and evidently do the works of the devil? Are they, who are visibly of the devil, because they “commit sin” and do his works, visibly of the church of Christ? Surely not. For “let him that nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity:” from all known sin, from all sins of omission and commission; otherwise let him not imagine that he is even of the visible church, or has any pretension to true christianity.—Let it be remembered, however, that in this visible church, especially when it is become a great house, there will be persons of different gifts or abilities, and intended to fill different offices; as is represented also under other metaphors. (Rom. xii. 4, 5; 1 Cor. xii. 12—17; and elsewhere.) And this leads me to speak of,

III. THE DIFFERENT VESSELS OF THE HOUSE, OR TEMPLE, WHICH IS BUILT ON THIS FOUNDATION.

“Some to honour and some to dishonour.” Some are designed and qualified for more honourable offices than others. And while some, by their holy tempers and practices, are an honour to the religion they profess there are others, who, if, by departing from outward iniquity, they obtain a name and place among the people of God, and be reckoned members of the visible church, yet, by their hypocrisy, formality, lukewarmness and negligence, are so far from adorning the doctrine of God their Saviour, or from being an honour to the cause of Christ, that they are a disgrace to it.—But “if a man purge himself from these:” by making ap-

plication by faith to Christ's cleansing blood, (1 John i. 7,) by praying for and receiving God's purifying Spirit, (Ezek. xxxvi. 25—27; 1 Pet. i. 2,) by receiving and obeying the purifying word, (John xv. 3; 1 Pet. i. 23,) by exercising purifying faith, (Acts. xv. 9,) and by self-denial and mortification, (Rom. viii. 13,) "he shall be a vessel unto honour:" he shall become a credit to the religion of Jesus, "sanctified," separated from sin and sinners, and dedicated to God in heart and life, "meet for the Master's use," for the service of Christ, "prepared unto," and employed in, "every good work," which he is called to perform.—Not only may those who are "vessels unto dishonour" in the bad sense, and a reproach, to the christian cause, become an honour to it by their vital piety and active virtue; but those whose gifts are inferior, and who are like vessels of wood and earth, adapted only for lower uses in the church, may, by properly exercising their gifts and graces, so improve them, as to become qualified for higher and more useful offices, and be, as it were, vessels of silver and gold. For "to him that hath," that makes a right use of, and improves what he hath, "shall more be given." (Matt. xiii. 12.)—Still, however, they will be but *vessels*, empty in themselves, and useless, if not filled by, and employed for, the Lord. — — —

CCVIII.

IMPORTANCE OF AN EARLY ACQUAINTANCE WITH THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

2 TIMOTHY iii. 15.

From a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

THESE words are closely connected with the preceding verses; in which the Apostle predicts, by the spirit of prophecy. that “in the latter days,” meaning under the Gospel dispensation, through the influence of pernicious doctrines, which would be propagated, “perilous times should come,” in which it would be difficult for the faithful followers of Jesus to discharge their consciences, and, at the same time, live in safety. “For men,” says he, “shall be lovers of their own-selves, covetous, boasters, proud,” &c.—“having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.” (Ver. 2—5.) And because some persons of this character were beginning to show themselves in the Church, the Apostle directed Timothy to avoid them, to be careful to give them no countenance or encouragement; but to reprove and withstand them. Then having mentioned some particular circumstances by which the false teachers might be known, lest he should think the apostacy thus beginning to make its appearance, would never be overcome, the Apostle intimates that it would terminate like the opposition of the Egyptian magicians to Moses. (Ver. 8.) “They shall proceed no farther, for their folly” and imposture “shall be made mani-

fest," and all who associate with them, or countenance them, shall share in their disgrace and punishment.— As to the advantage Timothy possessed, to enable him to escape the infection of their example, and to take this advice: he had "fully known the Apostle's doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, charity, patience, persecutions, afflictions," out of all which the Lord had delivered him; he knew the integrity and divine inspiration of the Apostle, of whom he had learned the true doctrine of the Gospel; and he had also and especially known the Holy Scriptures, even from his childhood, which, from leading him to believe in Christ, were "able to make him wise unto salvation." — — Consider,

I. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN BEING "WISE UNTO SALVATION."

To be "wise," is to have both knowledge and prudence, the latter being the proper and practical use of the former. Knowledge may be, and often is, where prudence is not. A man may understand physic or surgery, but, not making a practical use of his knowledge, may be unable to perform cures. We may say so of law, agriculture, manufactures, or mechanical arts. Thus, with respect to salvation; a man has knowledge concerning it who understands its nature, its necessity, its excellency, its duration, its importance, the way of attaining it; that it is from the mercy and grace of God, through the merits of Christ, by faith, preceded by repentance, accompanied with love, and followed by obedience. And yet he may not lay this knowledge to heart; he may not be savingly influenced by it, nor even seek, much less attain, the

salvation concerning which he is so well informed. And, in consequence, instead of being substantially benefitted by his knowledge, he may only be rendered the more inexcusable and miserable.—Hence it is necessary that this knowledge be not merely speculative and notional, but it must be experimental and practical. Our hearts must be affected by it; and what we know in theory we must also know by experience, viz., that we are sinful, guilty, and depraved; that we are bought by the blood of Christ, that we are influenced by the Spirit of God, that we are enlightened, justified, regenerated, renewed, strengthened, made victorious by faith over sin, the world, the enemy of souls, &c. Thus our knowledge will be practical. It will influence our whole conduct from day to day. Not only will our concern be awakened, our fears alarmed, (Heb. iv. 1,) our desires excited, (Ps. xlii. 1; lxiii. 1,) our hopes raised, our gratitude inflamed, that the blessing is attainable, our resolution roused to seek after it; but we shall be induced to shun whatever would prevent our attaining salvation, as every kind of sin, in temper, word, and work, unbelief, self-righteousness, the love of the world, lukewarmness, and sloth; to use all the means that God hath appointed, especially that of turning sincerely to God in heart and life, embracing Christ by faith, yielding ourselves up to the love and service of God, with every external mean or help leading thereto, such as the Word of God, prayer, &c.—Thus our knowledge, being properly and practically used, becomes worthy of the name of wisdom or prudence. For we not only desire and pursue, but do actually attain the salvation which we perceive and know to be so useful and necessary for

us; and are already saved from the guilt, power, and pollution of our sins into the favour, image, and fellowship of God, and receive a title to, and a progressive meetness for, everlasting salvation. —

II. THE MEANS WHEREBY WE MAY BE MADE THUS
“WISE UNTO SALVATION.”

“The Holy Scriptures.” In proof of this, let it be observed,—The Apostle describes the “Scriptures” to be “holy,” or sacred, because they were given by inspiration of the Holy Ghost, through the instrumentality of holy men; because they treat on holy things, contain holy doctrines, precepts, and promises, and are designed and calculated to make people holy. Thus they are distinguished from profane writings of all sorts, and from such as treat of mere morality but not of holiness.—They are given by inspiration of God, as appears from the majesty of their style, &c.* They are given for this very end, to make us “wise unto salvation.” Not for our amusement, or our information in history, poetry, morality, &c., or to improve our taste; and yet they answer even these ends, perhaps better than any other writings; but they are given for our salvation; (John v. 39;) and considering the wisdom, power, love and faithfulness of God, we may infer, they are adapted to this purpose. Their contents, also, on the most careful examination, show them to be so adapted, because they are “profitable for *doctrine*, for *reproof*, for *correction*, for *instruction in righteousness*.”†—This end, however, they will not answer of themselves. For “*faith*” is necessary with respect to all they contain; (Heb. iv. 2;) and especially with res-

* See Plan 129, vol. iv. p. 291. † See Plan 7, vol. i. p. 44.

pect to their testimony to Christ. (Luke xxiv. 44; John i. 45.) Hence, to understand them is necessary; and in order thereto, to be enlightened by the Holy Ghost. (John vi. 63; 1 Cor. ii. 12, 14; Eph. i. 17.) Without this, we shall neither understand nor be influenced by them.—Hence we must pray sincerely, fervently, importunately, perseveringly, for the Spirit: must bring to them an humble, simple, and teachable spirit: must carefully and diligently hear and read, consider and lay them to heart. — —

III. THE IMPORTANCE OF KNOWING THE SCRIPTURES FROM OUR CHILDHOOD.

If it had not been important for us to know them, God certainly would not have given them by inspiration:—would not have sealed them by the blood of his Son, and of prophets, apostles, evangelists, saints, and martyrs:—would not have confirmed them by miracles, and prophecies fulfilled.—If it be important to know them at all, it is important to know them when young. For, being ignorant, we have then need of these doctrines to inform us; being in a state of sinfulness and guilt, of depravity and weakness, being under condemnation and wrath, and without any christian experience, we have then need to “be convinced” reprov’d, and brought to repentance and faith, to Christ and righteousness: being subject to error, both in principle and practice, from the temptations surrounding us, from experience, from foolish and hurtful lusts, &c., we have need of “correction:” being but “babes in Christ,” weak, helpless, unstable, we have need to be edified and “instructed in righteousness,” and in every good work.—By an early acquaintance with them, we

shall escape the falling into great mistakes, much uncertainty and perplexity of mind respecting things of infinite and eternal moment.—We shall escape many dangerous errors, inconsistent with, or opposite to, the “truth as it is in Jesus,” the truth, which he sealed with his blood; many lusts and vices, intemperance, unrighteousness, ungodliness: many acts of sin and iniquity, leading to the ruin of character, property, health, body, soul; and hereby shall escape much misery, both here and hereafter.—We shall escape much unreasonable and sinful neglect of duty to God, our neighbour, and ourselves, and much waste of precious time, which otherwise would be irrecoverably lost, and misemployment, or non-employment, of various talents, for the abuse or neglect of which we shall be accountable.—Therefore, the glory of God, the good of mankind, and their own profit, in time and in eternity, are infinitely concerned in our being made acquainted early with the Holy Scriptures. Hence the necessity and utility of being taught to read in childhood, and, therefore, of these and similar charity schools for the benefit of the infant poor, and of contributing to their support. — —

CCIX.

CHRISTIANITY A WARFARE AND A RACE.

2 TIMOTHY iv. 7, 8.

I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

IN this way does the Apostle enforce the important advice, or, I should rather say, the solemn injunction given to his son Timothy in the preceding verses. That injunction is delivered in the following awful language; "I charge thee before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing, and his kingdom." He had spoken in similar terms, when enjoining on Timothy personal religion, near the close of the preceding Epistle: "I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Jesus Christ, that thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Epis. vi. 13.) What was this command? To shun the "love of money," "to follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness:" to "fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life." (Ver. 11, 12.) But the charge in the passage connected with the text, respects his ministry. "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season: reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine," &c. (Ver. 2—5.)—The

reason of this charge is, "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought," &c.—St. Paul is supposed, by most learned men, to have written this Second Epistle to Timothy, during his second imprisonment at Rome, and probably near the close of it, and consequently about A. D. 66, or 67, and in the 13th of Nero. He was then, it seems, in immediate expectation of death, in consequence of Nero's menaces, or of some express revelation from Christ, such as Peter probably had, a little before his martyrdom. (See 2 Pet. i. 14.) He, therefore, says, "I am now ready to be offered," or, (ἡδὴ σπενδομαι,) *I am now offered*, as a libation on God's altar, "and the time," &c. (Ch. iv. 6.) He speaks in similar language to the Philippians. "Yea, and if I be offered," (σπενδομαι,) or *poured out*, "upon the sacrifice and service," (θυσια και λειτουργια,)—the former word properly signifying *a sacrifice*, and the latter *the performance of any public service*, especially that pertaining to the worship of God,—“of your faith,” or to confirm your faith, “I joy and rejoice with you all.” (Phil. ii. 17.) — The argument seems to be this, “As the visible church will soon lose whatever advantage it may have derived from my labours, be thou the more diligent.” He then places before Timothy his own example. “I have fought,” &c. In these words we have,

I. THE CHARACTER OF A GENUINE CHRISTIAN, AND MORE ESPECIALLY OF A MINISTER OF CHRIST.

In our translation we read, “*A good fight;*” which is neither according to the original nor proper to the subject. It implies the notion of many different fights, being fought by different christians. This, indeed,

may in some sense be true, as all are not opposed exactly in the same way, nor have exactly the same difficulties to grapple with. But these differences, the Apostle does not take into the account here. He speaks of the one grand fight, or contest, common to all that really set their faces Zion-ward. His words therefore, are, (τον αγωνα τον καλον ηγωνισμαι,) *I have fought the fight, the good fight.* The Apostle's words must be referred, both to our first entrance on a christian life, and our progress therein, for we meet with great opposition, and many difficulties, in both, and are called to fight, to contend, and strive, yea, and to prevail. I observe, therefore, first,—We do not properly enter upon a life truly christian, and walk in the narrow way that leads to life, till we “enter in at the strait gate” of conversion, till we are justified and have peace with God, are taken into his favour, adopted into his family, regenerated, and born of his Spirit. Now this gate is termed *strait*, not only because it is entered by few, but because none enter it without a sense of difficulty and opposition. Hence our Lord says, “Strive,” (αγωνιζεσθε,) *agonize*; (Luke xiii. 24;) the very word used by the Apostle in our text, and rendered “I have fought;” literally, *I have agonized.* We cannot enter this gate of conversion without repentance towards God; for God never does, and never will, pardon the impenitent. This repentance includes illumination, conviction, humiliation, sorrow for, and hatred to, sin; a renunciation of our own righteousness and the world. This, however, our ignorance of ourselves, and of God's law, its spirituality, &c., our high thoughts of ourselves, and of our own righteousness, our insensibility and hardness of heart, attachment to

sin, particularly to some besetting sin, and to the world, our fear of man, and the carnal mind in general, oppose.—Again, we cannot enter this gate without faith in the Lord Jesus, as having “loved us, and given himself for us;” as “able and willing to save” us; implying a measure of confidence in him, and in the mercy and faithful promises of God for salvation. Now this, from a consciousness of past guilt, and the present power of sin, is very difficult to us; unbelief, doubts, fears, despondencies, &c., much oppose, and Satan will not fail to excite and encourage this opposition by his suggestions.—I must observe, further, we cannot enter in without earnest concern. Indifference, lukewarmness, sloth, and indolence, will do nothing in this matter. There must be a deep concern about our salvation, such as was in the three thousand, when they saw the wrath of God hanging over their heads, and said, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (Acts ii. 37.) Or, in the jailor at Philippi, when he exclaimed, “What shall I do to be saved?” (Acts xvi. 30.) There must be strong desire and resolute endeavour manifested in the use of all means, especially prayer and supplication, with self-denial, crucifying the flesh with its sinful lusts, doing violence, as it were, to nature. Hence this contention or combat, is here termed, (τοῦ αγωνα,) *the agony*; the very word used by our Lord, when in the garden “he offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death.” (Heb. v. 7.) “Being in an agony,” says St. Luke, “he prayed more earnestly,” &c. In such a way as this, many penitents have sought forgiveness of God and a new nature, and have not sought in vain, though deemed

enthusiasts, and derided by those whose eyes have not been opened to a sight of their sin and misery. I do not mean that all must necessarily experience the very same degree of distress. But all must be enlightened to see their great spiritual danger, must be convinced of their guilt, and deeply humbled on that account, must be anxious above all things, to be delivered from the "wrath to come;" wearied and "heavy laden," with their burden of guilt and sin, must seek "rest" in the Lord Jesus, must "ask," that they may "receive," &c. — —

But the whole christian life is a warfare. Of this the Apostle speaks. 1 Epis. vi. 12. When we have "entered in at the strait gate," and would now proceed on in the narrow way," we are still opposed by the remaining corruption of our nature: the "flesh lusteth against the Spirit," and this flesh must be resisted and mortified by the Spirit, (Rom. viii. 13;) must be watched against and denied. The world will oppose us: the things of it, as prosperity or adversity, honour or dishonour; the persons of it, their example, conversation, advice, rebukes, insults, and enmity: and not only they that "lie in the wicked one," but the wicked one himself, his subtilty and his power, &c. (Eph. vi. 12—18.) We must, therefore, "take to ourselves the whole armour of God." [Refer to the several branches of the christian armour, and show the necessity of being possessed of it and using it.] — —

Christianity is not, however, only a fight with, and a state of warfare against, visible and invisible foes, but a race. Thus the Apostle of himself says, not only "so fight I, not as one that beateth the air," but also, "I so run, not as uncertainly:" and in our text, "I

have finished my course:" and (Heb. xii. 1,) we read, "Seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnessess, let us lay aside every weight, and run with patience the race that is set before us."—But what is this race or course? It is a course of christian experience, a course of duty, and a course of suffering.—Of christian experience. It is of great importance, certainly, to know the great subjects of christianity, even in theory: but this is not sufficient; we must also know them by experience: as that we are fallen, depraved, spiritually helpless by nature; that we are redeemed and saved by grace; that we have an interest in, and union with, Christ; that he teaches as our Prophet, reconciles as our Priest, delivers, protects, and governs as our King; enlightens as our "wisdom," justifies as our "righteousness," regenerates and purifies as our "sanctification." Not only must repentance and faith, but holiness, be experienced; and in this course we must go, from stage to stage, and from "strength to strength," from a "babe" to a "young man," to a "father in Christ;" from justification to sanctification, and from one degree to another; from the favour of God to his image, from some communications of his renewing grace to deeper communion with him, and from grace to glory.—A course of duty, and that to God, our neighbour, and ourselves; or, in consequence of having "denied ungodliness and worldly lust," the "living godly, righteously, and soberly in this present world." This is the general rule of duty, by which all are under an indispensable obligation to walk. But, added to this, there are particular duties incumbent on each, according to his calling and station in life, as on husbands, wives, parents, &c. The Apostle seems here

to refer chiefly to his course of duty as a Minister of Christ, viz., feeding and overseeing the flock of Christ, doctrine, reproof, exhortation, &c. All duties are to be comprehended, whether common to all christians, or peculiar to certain stations and offices, which must spring from faith and love as their principles, be directed to the glory of God as their end, and be performed in a spirit of seriousness and watchfulness, as in the Divine presence, in a spirit of humility, meekness, &c.—A course of suffering; whether in property, in regard to which St. Paul suffered the loss of all things; of reproach, he was reviled, like his Master; of persecution, which he endured in many ways, and, last of all, martyrdom. He had a hard course to run in this respect. (2 Cor. iv. 8—11; xi. 23—29.) But he persevered through all in a truly christian spirit. (1 Cor. iv. 12—14.) Thus he exhorts Timothy. ver. 5. —

Another particular in St. Paul's character remains to be noticed, expressed in these words, "I have kept the faith." By the faith here is meant, not chiefly justifying or saving faith; but rather the grand doctrines, or truths of the Gospel, which are to be believed, or the principal articles of the christian faith, (Jude 3; Phil i. 27; 1 Tim. iii. 9,) termed "the form of sound words," (2 Tim. i. 13,) which he exhorts Timothy to "hold fast in faith and love," (1 Epis. vi. 20;) and to "charge others to teach no other doctrine," &c. (1 Epis. i. 3.) This relates to the being, unity, and attributes of God; the truth and inspiration of the Holy Scriptures; the fall and depravity of human nature; our redemption and salvation by the Son of God; the person and offices of the Redeemer, those of the Holy Spirit, &c.—It is

of incalculable importance, not only to assent to, but to be firmly persuaded of, and lay to heart, these truths. Through the belief of them we are chosen to salvation. (2 Thess. ii. 13.) The knowledge of them “makes us free.” (John viii. 11.) By them we are “begotten again.” (Jam. i. 18.) By obeying them we “purify our souls,” (1 Pet. i. 22,) and through these our heavenly Father sanctifies us. (John xvii. 17.)—I come now to consider.

II. THE GLORIOUS REWARD WHICH WAS LAID UP FOR THE APOSTLE, FOR EVERY FAITHFUL MINISTER OF CHRIST, AND INDEED FOR “ALL THAT LOVE HIS APPEARING.”

“The crown of righteousness” is the honour, glory, and felicity with which the Lord will recompense his faithful servants.—This is termed, “the crown of righteousness,” because it is the reward not only of labours and sufferings, like those of the Apostle and others, “that labour in the word and doctrine,” but of all the truly righteous, all to whom righteousness is imputed, in whom it is implanted, and by whom it is practised. (Rom. v. 21.)—Hence my text says, it shall be conferred on “all that love his appearing.” This only the righteous, that are justified, sanctified, and obedient, can do. For only such believe in and love him, are saved from slavish fear of him, and from tormenting fear of death and judgment.—Peculiar rewards, however, await faithful ministers that honour and serve Christ, and “win souls.” This must be so in the nature of things; as it must highly delight all that love the Lord, to see that they have been, in any way, instrumental in glorifying him; and all that love the souls of men, that they have been the means of saving them:—

from the Lord's remunerative mercy and equity, who is not "unrighteous to forget their work and labour of love." (Heb. vi. 10.)* — —

CCX.

THE DUTY OF ADORNING OUR CHRISTIAN PROFESSION.

TITUS ii. 10.

—That they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.

THESE words primarily belong to christian servants, who, low as their condition is, by a proper conduct, especially towards their masters, may and ought to adorn the Gospel. But they are equally applicable to christians in all other conditions of life; to masters as well as servants; husbands and wives; parents and children; who, by a faithful discharge of duty in every relation of life in which they stand, may "adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour."—Let us,

I. TAKE A GENERAL VIEW OF THE DOCTRINE OF GOD OUR SAVIOUR.

It is not the doctrine of God, as our Creator, Preserver, Benefactor, Governor, &c., which is here meant, but the doctrine that concerns our salvation;—our fall in Adam, and its consequences, (Rom. v. 12,) ignorance, insensibility, sinfulness, guilt, condemnation, &c.;—our

* This being a discourse preached on occasion of the death of an eminent minister, was applied throughout; and it was shown, at last, how the whole was exemplified in him.—Ed.

redemption by Christ: (1 Cor. xv. 1—3; Rom. v. 6—10; 1 Pet. i. 18:)—the means whereby we partake of this redemption, viz., repentance and faith; (Mark i. 15; Acts xx. 21:)—the effects produced, as justification, whereby we pass from condemnation and wrath to acquittance and favour with God, and are entitled to eternal life; (Acts xiii. 38; Tit. iii. 7;) as renovation of nature, whereby we are qualified to bring forth fruit to the glory of God;—the necessity of continuing in this state of salvation, and increasing in holiness; (John xv. 1; Rom. xi. 19—22:)—our enemies and hinderances; Satan, the world, the flesh; (Eph. vi. 10—19; 1 John ii. 14, 15; Rom. viii. 12, 13:)—our friends and helps; God, (Rom. viii. 31,) Christ, (Heb. iv. 14—16; 2 Cor. xii. 9;) the Spirit, (Rom. viii. 26;) angels, (Heb. i. 14;) the people of God:—that we are upon our trial for eternity, and many eyes upon us: (Heb. xii. 1:)—the issue of all, the death of the body, the immortality of the soul, the resurrection, judgment, eternal life. —

II. SHOW WHAT IS MEANT BY ADORNING IT.

Here is an allusion to the ornaments of dress. Dress may be fit or unfit for us, suitable or unsuitable: our temper and conduct must be suitable to the Gospel. Instance, in the doctrine of our fall and its consequences. Does the Gospel teach that we are fallen, depraved, &c.? then all high thoughts of ourselves, all self-confidence, and impenitence are unsuitable to this doctrine; humility, self-abasement, and godly sorrow, are suitable thereto. In the doctrine of our redemption; unbelief, diffidence, despondency, are unsuitable; faith, confidence in God, and peace of mind, are suitable thereto. In that of the great love of God and of

Christ, manifested in our redemption; ingratitude, enmity to God, and disobedience are unsuitable to this; gratitude, love and obedience are suitable to it. Considering our desert on the one hand, and his goodness and faithfulness on the other; his engagement not to leave nor forsake us, and to make "all things work for our good:" discontent with our lot, and impatience under afflictions and trials, are unsuitable; resignation, patience, and contentment are suitable. If we be justified by faith, and made God's children and heirs, then worldly affections, expectations and sorrow are unsuitable; "affections set on things above," hope of eternal life, and joy in Christ Jesus, are suitable. If renewed, and made "trees of righteousness," bad fruit is unsuitable; whereas good fruit is suitable to a good tree. Considering the danger we are in of falling away, and the absolute necessity of perseverance, carnal security and carelessness are unsuitable; but to be sensible of our danger, and deeply concerned and serious in adopting the means of avoiding it, is very suitable. Does the Gospel teach us that we are in a state of trial, and surrounded with enemies? unwatchfulness, an unarmed and unguarded state, are unsuitable; watchfulness, caution, and preparation with circumspection, are very suitable. The Gospel brings "life and immortality to light," and a future state of everlasting punishment: care and anxiety about present things, and unconcern about, and neglect of, future and eternal things, are unsuitable; but comparative indifference about present things, and a deep concern about those things which are future and eternal, is reasonable and proper. — —

Another end for which dress is used is to represent

and exhibit the persons who wear it in their true character and proper loveliness. Just so, our temper and conduct should be calculated to set forth the doctrine of the Gospel in the most correct and clear point of view. As the Gospel every where proceeds on the supposition of man's being a fallen and degenerate creature, and as the salvation offered in it is represented as being by "grace through faith," Pharisees and self-righteous persons give mankind a false view of it, whereas those who renounce their own righteousness, and submit to the righteousness of God, exhibit the doctrine of Christ in a just light. As its end and design is to ensure universal holiness and righteousness, Antinomians represent it in a false light, and those who manifest a holy life and conduct afford a just view of it. As it teaches that "God is a Spirit," and that he must be "worshipped in spirit and in truth," that the "kingdom of God" must be "within us," that he only "is a Jew" or christian "that is one inwardly;" formalists, and dead, lifeless professors give a false representation of christianity; and lively, experimental, and spiritual christians show it in a true light. The incarnation, life, death, resurrection, intercession of Christ, the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the body, a future judgment, and an eternal state, are all doctrines of infinite moment; the lukewarm and slothful, therefore, give mankind a mistaken view of the Gospel; while zeal and diligence put it in a right point of view. It teaches that "God is not unrighteous, to forget our work and labour of love," that "his reward is with him," and that "he will give to every man according as his work shall be;" therefore the negligent and slothful in good works, give an erroneous

representation of this religion; and to be diligent and active therein, is representing it aright. —

A third end, which some have in view in adopting various kinds of dress, is to add to their comeliness and beauty, and make themselves appear more agreeable than they really are. We cannot possibly give greater beauty to the Gospel, than it has, but there are certain graces and virtues, which are more calculated to set forth its beauty and amiableness, and to show it to advantage. Such are the graces and virtues recommended Rom. xii. 9—18; 1 Cor. xiii. 4—7; Col. iii. 12—17; and in the verses preceding the text, as truth, uprightness, justice, mercy, charity, meekness, gentleness, benevolence, sobriety, industry, frugality, liberality, cheerfulness, gratitude: — — As the Gospel of Christ is the only source from which the true and constant exercise of those virtues can proceed, so the appearance of them in a professor of christianity eminently adorns his profession. — —

III. HOW THIS MUST BE DONE “IN ALL THINGS.”

(*ἐν παντί*.)—In all persons, old and young, rich and poor, high and low.—In all conditions and states, as married or single, parents or children, masters or servants.—In all places: at home, abroad, alone, in company, in the church or market, with our friends, or enemies, the righteous or wicked.—In all employments: in religious, civil, and natural actions.—At all times: on the Lord’s days; on other days; at morning, noon, and night; in childhood, youth, manhood, middle age, old age. — —

Particularly:—in what way may this be done?—By servants: with whom I begin, because they are partic-

ularly named here, and the passage belongs primarily to them. They are much more largely spoken to in the Epistles, both by St. Peter and St. Paul, than the other conditions of men; either, first, as having fewer advantages of education, and means of instruction, or as being more numerous among real christians in the first ages of christianity than others, as they may be still. Therefore, if want of time oblige me to cut any short, it shall be the other classes.—Servants owe to their masters subjection and obedience. (1 Pet. ii. 18; Tit. ii. 9; Eph. vi. 5; Col. iii. 22.) Although they are your masters only in a qualified sense, and during this state of flesh and blood, and you have but one proper and absolute Master, to whom you owe unlimited obedience, yet to them, as invested with a part of his power, you owe a limited obedience and subjection. This is incumbent on day-labourers, on journeymen, household servants, and apprentices. The two former ought to follow the directions of him who hires them: household servants ought to do every thing at such a time, and in such a manner, as is appointed; an apprentice must be obedient, according to the terms of his indenture. This implies the forbearing to do things of their own heads, without or against the consent of their master or mistress; their persons, their time, and their actions being their master's during the time of their service, and their master's will being their rule. They may not go where they will, but only where they are permitted or ordered; they may not do their own business, nor what business they please, but what is allotted them.—Servants must do what their masters command. As to the manner of this obedience, it is to be “with all fear,” (1 Pet. ii. 18,) with rever-

ence, respect, and honour; a fear of injuring, grieving, or displeasing; “with fear and trembling;” (Eph. vi. 5;) a fear producing care, watchfulness, and diligence, with a fear of offending him who is your Master in heaven. In respect of the ground of this fear, you should consider your masters as God’s deputies, and partly in his place; and therefore, however poor, mean, weak, and aged, must not be despised—Every means must be used to “please them well in all things.” (Tit. ii. 9.) You should study and endeavour to give them satisfaction in whatever you do: do all in the most obliging manner you can, and in the way they wish: labour that your whole service and behaviour may be acceptable to them. Obey them “with good will;” (Eph. vi. 7;) from a cordial benevolence to them, out of love to God, with earnest desire to make their lives as easy and happy and comfortable as you can.—Nevertheless, you must not act as men-pleasers, or as having no farther design than to please men, to gain their esteem, to be well thought or spoken of, or to gain temporal advantage, which may result from their favour. This would make you “eye-servants.” Do the same in their absence as in their presence, “in singleness of heart,” without any sinister motive to temporal advantage, but with a single eye to please God. (Eph. vi. 6—8;) considering the will of your master as the will of God; unless his commands be contrary to the will of God: “only in the Lord.”—Do your service “heartily,” (Col. iii. 23, *ἐκ ψυχῆς*, *from your soul*, your whole soul, with all your might. Do every thing as quick as you can, and as well as you can. Do it at least as well as if done for yourself. Day-labourers should do as much work as they can in a day; household servants should fulfil all the business they

can, using their understanding and strength.—These directions are proper to be observed, be their masters good or bad. (1 Tim. vi. 1, 2.)—Be honest: “not purloining;” not secreting, keeping back, using as their own, disposing, or giving away to others any thing belonging to your masters, without their consent: not hurting, wasting, or suffering any thing to be lost through your carelessness. Do not do as your fellow-servants do, or as is the way of the world; but “keep yourselves pure.”—Be true: being guilty of no wilful lie to your master or fellow-servants; having your conversation “in simplicity and godly sincerity.” If overtaken in a fault, use no deceit, equivocation, or prevarication, to hide yourselves, or any fellow-servant.—Be faithful; (Tit. ii. 10;) using “all good fidelity;” with regard to your masters’ goods, preserving and increasing them to the uttermost of your power; study his interest as you would your own, and promote it by every means in your power, regarding neither your ease nor pleasure. With regard to his reputation, conceal his faults and infirmities, and keep his secrets; let there be no back-biting, tale-bearing, or slander found with you. With regard to his soul, with all the plainness which your station allows, but with respect and humility, advise, reprove, and “suffer not sin upon him.”—Be patient;—steadily follow these directions, and be subject “not only to the good, but also to the froward.” (1 Pet. ii. 18.) “Not answering again,” (Tit. ii. 9,) though you be blamed unjustly, taking Christ for your example in suffering with patience. (1 Pet. ii. 21—23.)—But very different is the situation of English *servants* and those *slaves* to whom the Apostle spoke. These latter could not change their master, being his absolute property; you may

escape unjust treatment, by appealing, if needful, to the authority of law, or resigning the situation you hold. —

The duties of Masters are,—To be just to their servants, whether labourers, journeymen, household servants, or apprentices; performing the conditions on which they engaged them, as to wages, food, and conveniences.—To admonish and reprove them for their faults, more especially faults against God; yet with tenderness and mildness, “forbearing” not only bitter and opprobrious language, but even “threatening, knowing their Master also is in heaven.” (Eph. vi. 9.) They should thus show they have the good of their servants as well as their own at heart.—To provide them, as far as possible, with all means of necessary instruction, and allow them sufficient time to worship God in private as well as in public.—To give them only reasonable commands, not laying greater burdens on them than they can bear.—To encourage them in well-doing, by using them with that kindness which their faithfulness, diligence, and piety, deserve.—In this manner may christian servants and masters make religion appear amiable and lovely, even before unbelievers, when they see its influence on the temper and conduct of its possessors. * * *

CCXI.

THE PRACTICAL EFFECTS OF THE GRACE
OF GOD.

TITUS ii. 11—13.

For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ.

THE Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is greatly abused by two classes of people, who would, nevertheless, be thought its warm and principal friends. By those who, being unacquainted with our fall in Adam, and with the sinfulness and guilt, the depravity and weakness, entailed upon us thereby, and overlooking the grace manifested in our redemption by Jesus Christ, would make our holy religion a mere system of moral precepts, enforced by certain sanctions: such are the people termed Socinians, and most of the nominal christians among us: like the Pharisees of old, “touching the righteousness of the law,” they are perhaps externally blameless, but “go about to establish their own, and submit not to the righteousness of God.” It is abused also by those who, in their zeal for the free grace of God, and salvation by grace, neglect to depart, and, if teachers, to inculcate the necessity of departing, from iniquity, and turn the grace of God into wantonness: such are those who are generally termed Antinomians in our day, who “make void the law” through a pretence of faith, and “contin”:

in sin that grace may abound.”—It appears from the former chapter, that persons of both these classes, especially of the latter, had crept in among the christians in Crete. There were, St. Paul assures us, “many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, especially of the circumcision.” (Ch. i. 10.) Some of these, probably, like those mentioned in the first Epistle to Timothy, having swerved from that “love” which, “out of a pure heart, a good conscience, and faith unfeigned, is the end of the commandment,” had “turned aside to vain jangling, desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they said, nor whereof they affirmed.” (1 Tim. i. 6, 7.) These contended for rites and ceremonies, and gave heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men. (Ch. i. 14.) Others again, probably native Cretans, were liars, &c. (Ver. 12.) Though “they professed to know God, in works they denied him.” (Ver. 16.)—In opposition to both these, St. Paul exhorts Titus, (ch. ii. 1.) to teach “the things which become sound doctrine,” a specimen of which is given in various particulars. (Ver. 2—10.) The words of the text, thus considered in connection with the context, appear to be in the nature of an argument, to enforce the preceding advice: as though the Apostle had said, “Do these things, for ‘the grace of God hath appeared,’ &c. which directs and requires us to do them; ‘teaches us to deny ungodliness, &c., and to live righteously,’ &c.; furnishes us with the noblest motives to do so; those of love to God, in return for his grace, of fear lest we should abuse that grace, or ‘receive it in vain,’ and of hope in respect of future happiness, if we use that grace aright; and which affords us every encouragement and necessary aid to do so, promising forgiveness for the past, and

the Holy Spirit to help our infirmities for the future.” These words cut up by the roots the two above-mentioned errors; that of the Pharisees, by assuring us that “the grace of God hath appeared;” that of the Antinomians, by teaching to “deny ungodliness,” &c.—We have,

I. THE FOUNDATION OF ALL TRUE RELIGION.

By “the grace of God” here spoken of, and said to “bring salvation,” many commentators understand “the Gospel of the grace of God,” which they think is also the meaning of the expression in 2 Cor. vi. 1. The Gospel may be termed “the grace of God,” by a metonymy of the cause for the effect, because it flows from the grace of God, that is, from his free, unmerited favour, which is the principle meaning of the expression, and from the influences of the Spirit, which is another sense of it; (Luke i. 78, 79;) it displays that grace in both these respects, it offers, and invites us to receive, and urges upon us that grace: it is the principal mean whereby God communicates his grace to our souls in the above-mentioned senses.—And the Gospel may be said to “bring salvation,” inasmuch as it brings tidings of salvation: it shows us our ignorance and guilt, our depravity, weakness, and misery, and therefore, our need of salvation; it shows us also its nature, excellency, and necessity, and how to attain it. Nay, it brings salvation itself. It is (ἡ σωτηρία) saving, not only intentionally, but actually, with respect to every one that believeth. (Mark xvi. 16; Rom. i. 16.) Receiving it in faith, and obeying it, we are saved from darkness into light; from guilt, and condemnation and wrath, into the Divine favour; from depravity and

weakness, into purity and power; and from misery into happiness. —

But how can it be said this Gospel hath “appeared to all men:” It has not been “put under a bushel,” or lain concealed in a corner of the world, like the Jewish law, which was confined to one particular people of little note; but, “though hid from ages and generations,” is now “made manifest,” produced, and exhibited publicly upon the great theatre of the world, in the view of all nations. (Rom. xvi. 25, 26.) It is not withheld by its Author from any, but commanded to be “preached to every creature.” (Mark xvi. 15.) It hath appeared to men of all nations and conditions, to barbarians as well as Greeks and Romans and Jews, to servants as well as masters, to bond as well as free: It hath at least appeared to us.—But if this interpretation be thought not to answer sufficiently to the universality of the Apostle’s declaration, there is no reason why we should not understand him as speaking of the grace of God *itself*, in the above-mentioned senses, viz., of his unmerited love, and of the influence of the Spirit of God. This, it is well known, is the moving and efficient cause of our salvation, the source of all our wisdom and power, purity and comfort, of repentance, faith, and holiness, and of every grace and virtue. And this certainly hath appeared to men universally. For God hath manifested his love to all in giving Christ to die “for all,” and hath not “left himself without witness” in any breast; but, as Christ by his grace has “tasted death for every man,” so his “Spirit strives” with every man, (Gen. vi. 3,) and “the true light lighteth,” more or less, “every man that cometh into the world,” although it be not understood nor apprehended

by all. (1 John i. 4, 5, 9.) The Spirit enlightens, awakens, convinces, alarms, encourages, draws, revives, cheers, strengthens, purifies, and comforts those who do not “quench,” but obey its motions. It prevents, accompanies, follows, restrains from evil, and excites to, and confirms in, good—inspiring holy thoughts, desires, designs, resolutions, and enabling us to “bring them to good effect.” — —

Now, the grace of God in these different senses is the foundation and source of all true religion. Observe,—Not our own reason or wisdom, which cannot give us light and knowledge; not our own righteousness, which can never merit salvation, or recommend us to God; not our own strength or ability, which is insufficient to help us to do or suffer the will of God, to be pious or virtuous; (John xv. 4, 5; 2 Cor. iii. 5;)—but the grace of God in these different senses, viz., *Divine light* from the Word and Spirit of God; this instructs, (παιδεύουσα,) “teaching us,” as a master his pupils, as we are able to receive it: *the free favour and unmerited love of God*; this, by justifying and adopting, encourages and inclines, adds correction and discipline to instruction, and gives us the will to be the Lord’s: *the influence of the Spirit*; this gives resolution, fortitude, and power. We may infer from this, that they who are not acquainted with, nor possessed of, the grace of God, can have no true religion: or their religion is a superstructure without a foundation; that is, it is only imaginary, illusive, unreal. — —

II. THE SUPERSTRUCTURE TO BE RAISED ON THIS FOUNDATION.

Religion itself is the superstructure that must be raised on this foundation, the stream that must flow from this fountain. It consists of two parts.—It is negative: “denying ungodliness and worldly lusts.” In this way true religion first appears, and manifests its reality: it makes us cease to do evil,” before we can “learn to do well;” it strips us of “the old man,” before it clothes us with “the new:” without this there can be no religion: there is not even repentance, if there be not its fruits. (Matt. iii. 8; Luke iii. 8.) “Ungodliness” implies whatever is contrary to faith in God, or the knowledge, fear, and love of him; as all infidel principles, whether atheistical, deistical, or socinian; all idolatry, superstition, false worship; neglect of the worship of God in private, in our families, and in public; all profanation of his name, day, word, or ordinances; the violation of his laws, whether enjoining duty, or prohibiting sin; the remaining contentedly in ignorance of him, in alienation from him, or in enmity against him: these things must be renounced as contrary to piety.—“Worldly lusts,” or desires, are such as are found in worldly men, and have the things of this present world for their object, as riches, pleasures, honours; earthly desires, arising from covetousness; sensual desires, from sensuality; devilish desires, from pride, anger, malice, envy, revenge; irregular desires, which have unlawful things for their object; inordinate desires, which, though fixed upon lawful objects, are immoderate. These must be denied, as contrary to sobriety and righteousness, and

utterly inconsistent with that spiritual and heavenly mind, which christianity is intended and calculated to produce. This is the negative part of religion.

But it has a positive part, which is, to “live soberly, righteously, and godly.” Man is here considered as an individual on earth, as a member of society connected with his fellow-creatures, and as a creature, a redeemed creature, a subject and servant, and child of his Creator, Preserver, King, and Lord. Consider man as an individual, and suppose him placed alone on the earth. to have neither Creator nor fellow-creature, still it would be his duty to himself, his interest, and, therefore, his wisdom, to “live soberly:” to shun gluttony, drunkenness, uncleanness. as being contrary to health of body and serenity of mind, and an abuse of the things of the world; to keep all his members, senses, appetites, under due restraint and government, his passions also, without which his mind could not be at peace; to see that his desires, and all his affections, be placed upon lawful and proper objects, and be exercised with moderation; that he sit so loose to every outward and created object, and be so indifferent towards it, as neither to idolize nor cleave with inordinate affection, to any good thing he may possess, nor be discontented if he lose any. The original word means also, (*σωφρονως*.) to live *prudently*; cautiously, and watchfully, looking forward to another life, and preparing for our everlasting welfare there.—Man is born in, and intended for society. He does not stand alone on earth: he has parents, brethren and sisters, relatives, friends, neighbours, fellow-creatures, “of the same blood.” Therefore he must “live righteously;” must cultivate truth, sincerity, veracity, fidelity, punctuality: his

words must be the index of his heart, and he must fulfil his promises and engagements: must cultivate justice, must “do to others as he would they should do to him;” must not oppress, defraud, over-reach, or injure any man, in his property, character or person, especially his soul: must cultivate mercy and charity, good-will to all, compassion and sympathy to those in distress and misery, relief and bounty to those in want, forgiveness to those that have injured us; believing and hoping the best of all, concealing their faults where duty to ourselves or our fellow-creatures does not require them to be declared; grieving at their folly, sin, or misery, and rejoicing in the contrary; endeavouring to be useful, especially to their best, their eternal interests: this is our absolute duty, as not being born for ourselves only, but “members one of another.”—Man has a Creator, Preserver, &c., and it will not avail to do his duty to himself and his neighbour, and neglect it to him, to whom he owes infinitely more than to any other being. He must be “godly.” Godliness has its source in the knowledge of, and faith towards God, as to his being, attributes, providence, grace, works, and word. It implies the fearing him with a reverential, awful, filial, and watchful fear; the loving him with a love of esteem, desire, gratitude, and complacency, because of his loveliness and loving-kindness, so as to give our hearts to him, to make him our chief good, and the source of our happiness; being zealous for his glory, and doing every thing in order to it; being obedient to his will in all things, great and small, out of conscience towards him; being resigned and patient under the dispensations of his providence; aspiring after and seeking a conformity to him, and the everlasting enjoyment of

him; in order to this, using every means of grace he hath appointed, and waiting upon him in all his ordinances.—All this we must do in “this present world.” We must *live* thus in the world: many would be glad to *die* thus, who care not how they live. Such must we be in the midst of the many snares, difficulties, dangers, temptations, trials, troubles, pains, and pleasures of this world. *In the present age*, (ἐν τῷ νῦν αἰῶνι,) in this ungodly, unrighteous, and adulterous age, even while surrounded with examples of the contrary conduct. No wonder that the Apostle attributes all to the free “grace of God bringing salvation,” no other source being adequate to such effects. — —

III. THE HAPPINESS THAT AWAITS ALL THAT DO THIS, AND THE BLESSED PROSPECT OPENED BEFORE THEM.

“Looking for that blessed hope,” &c.—Hope here is put for the object of hope, a state of future and eternal blessedness, perfection, and felicity, both in soul and body.—The grace of God begets us again to a well grounded and “lively hope” of it: the Gospel enlightens us as to this hope, and reveals it: the free, unmerited mercy and love of God justifies, adopts, and entitles us to it; the Spirit of grace renews, and fits us for it.—In the way of godliness, righteousness, and sobriety, we wait for it, and are brought to it.—“The glorious appearing of the great God,” or, *of our great “God and Saviour,”* shall raise our bodies, and after the process of the final judgment, shall put us in the possession of it. — —

CCXII.

AN ACQUAINTANCE WITH CHRIST THE
FOUNDATION OF EXPERIMENTAL AND
PRACTICAL RELIGION.

TITUS ii. 14.

Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a people, zealous of good works.

How seldom is the religion of Jesus considered in its proper extent, and in the just connection of its parts! How rarely is it viewed in all its branches, and in that beautiful proportion which one bears to another, and to the whole! It comprehends three important particulars: knowledge, experience, and practice. As a foundation and source of knowledge, it reveals many great and glorious truths, which must be understood and believed: as invitations to experience, and subjects of it, it offers various and great privileges, which must be received and enjoyed: and as a directory and the matter of practice, it enjoins many and necessary duties, which must be known and performed. When these several particulars are duly attended to, and this doctrinal, experimental, and practical christianity is truly and cordially embraced, a divine edifice is erected, whose foundation is laid upon a rock, whose superstructure is raised of gold, silver and precious stones, whose different apartments are suitably adorned and furnished, and whose inhabitant is the God of glory.—But instead of this, not a few, and some of them persons who would be thought even builders in Zion, at-

tend only to the foundation of religion, and think it sufficient if they can lay this in a proper acquaintance with, and faith in, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the doctrines of his Gospel. Others, without ever thinking of laying the foundation, are idly employed in attempting to raise the superstructure of christian experience and practice, like an imaginary castle in the air, or "the baseless fabric of a vision." While others, again, without attending either to the knowledge of gospel truths, or the experience of gospel privileges, are only intent on adorning and beautifying, with outward works, a fabric which, being without foundation and superstructure, has, in reality, no existence, save in the imagination of their own minds. Persons of these several descriptions continually meet with their proper reproof and condemnation in the epistles of this Apostle. Innumerable are the passages in which he presents us, and that in few words, with a complete system of christianity in all its parts, and these perfectly adjusted and placed in their proper order and due dependence one upon another. Three admirable instances of this kind occur in this Epistle to Titus: one in the next chapter, (ver. 3—8,) and two in this, (ver. 11—14;) of which one very remarkable and instructive instance has already been considered; the other, equally important, we shall now consider.

I. IT LAYS THE FOUNDATION OF CHRISTIANITY IN A PROPER ACQUAINTANCE WITH, AND FAITH IN THE KINDNESS AND BOUNTY OF OUR GREAT REDEEMER.

"Who gave himself for us."—To understand this, we must consider,—Who it was that gave himself?—in what sense he gave himself?—and for whom?

He that gave himself, we find, is spoken of in the preceding verses, and termed, “the great God and our Saviour;” or rather, (του μεγαλου Θεου και σωτηρος ημων,) *our great God and Saviour*. (1 Tim. v. 21; Isai. ix. 6; xl. 10; Rom. ix. 5.) Elsewhere he is termed, the wisdom, word, power, and Son of God, (Prov. viii. 22; John i. 1; 1 Cor. i. 24; Heb. i. 3.) Now, in this respect, he “gave himself,” gave his pre-existent and divine nature to be united to, and eternally one with us; and in effect, the property of our human nature: as a husband is united to, is one with, and, in a sense, the property of his wife, with all that he is and has. In consequence of this, all the riches, glories, felicities, perfections, virtues, and powers of the divine nature become the property of the human, and we have “God manifest in the flesh;” have “Immanuel God with us:” we have the divine wisdom and word, teaching us in our nature, humbly and familiarly, as the light and life of men, and making us “wise unto salvation:” we have the divine power in the person of the same Immanuel, performing many mighty and most beneficent signs and wonders to confirm the doctrine of that instructing wisdom and word, and to awaken the attention of mankind to it: we have the Son of God, “the only begotten of the Father,” the “Heir” and “Lord of all,” (Heb. i. 2; Col. i. 16; Acts x. 36,) made the Son of man, and, therefore, our friend and brother, our head and husband, “bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh,” that we, the sons of men, might be sons of God, and “joint heirs” with him of eternal glory.

Further, if we consider him, after his incarnation, as God and man, and Son of God and Son of man, he gives himself again: his whole person is given for us by

the Father; (John iii. 16;) and by himself. A person may with propriety be said to be given for another, when he is wholly dedicated, and employed for the good of that other; when he is exposed to sufferings, and especially when he is exposed to death, for the advantage of that other; and when his person or life is given to ransom the person or life of another. In these three senses, Christ, in his complete person as Son of God and Son of man, has given himself for us.—As to all the powers of the divine and human nature, he was, while on earth, consecrated and employed for our good. His wisdom, power, and love, *as God*; his understanding, memory, judgment, will, his eyes, ears, hands, his head and heart, his soul and body, *as man*, were devoted and exerted for us. — He was the servant of mankind, and was at the call and command of the meanest of them; and now he is in heaven, he does not overlook or forget us; he is employed for our advantage, as our advocate, intercessor, forerunner, preparing places for us, and us for those places. His person and offices, his divinity and humanity, his preceding humiliation and subsequent exaltation, his past sufferings and present glory, his riches, power, and authority are dedicated to, and employed for, our benefit, and, in a sense, made the property of all that will accept them.—His body and soul were exposed to sufferings, and those of no light and ordinary kind, for us. His divine nature, in itself, could not suffer, but it gave that enlargement to the faculties of the human, which rendered it capable of undergoing greater sufferings than it could have been capable of without that union. And even his divine nature might be said, by a figure, to suffer; (Phil. ii. 6, 7;) he, the divine Word and Son.

concealed, and, in some sense, divested himself, “of the glory he had with the Father,” (John xvii.) and in which he had appeared to the patriarchs and other ancient worthies; he, the Creator of heaven and earth, appeared as a creature in this lower world,—the Lord as a servant. But as a man, still united to God, he suffered poverty, (2 Cor. viii. 9,) being born of poor parents, supporting himself by his hand labour, &c.; he suffered reproach, being called a Nazarene, an impostor, a confederate with Beelzebub: suffered pain and anguish in his soul, (Matt. xxvi. 36,) and in his body, every sense and member of which he gave to participate in the ignominy and pain due to sin; he gave “his face to shame and spitting,” his “back to the smiters, and his cheeks to those that plucked off the hair,” his hands and his feet to be nailed to the accursed tree, his heart to be melted like wax; he “poured out his soul unto death,” in order to “make an offering for sin.” —

That we may be able to estimate the greatness of this gift, let us consider that it is thought a great thing if a man give a considerable part of his property, suppose it be a tenth; having a thousand, if he give a hundred; or having a hundred, if he give ten pounds; much more if he give fifteen, and much more still if he give half of what he possesses. But if any one were to give the whole, and to render himself poor, it would be regarded extraordinary kindness indeed. And yet many would give even their whole property rather than part with their good name, and resign their character to reproach and insult, that they should be deemed deceivers, or villains; nay, and many would part with this also, rather than give up their pleasure in the gratification of their senses, their appetites, and passions.

and the enjoyment of what they love, or their ease, by exposing themselves to toil and labour, hardship and fatigue from day to day. But who would not even part with this, rather than give up their liberty, and submit to be bound and imprisoned? And dear as liberty is, thousands, there is reason to think, would part with this great privilege rather than give up their bodies to be scourged, or beat, or broke upon the wheel. And would not some submit even to these sufferings, rather than part with their lives? Certainly, many would give up even their lives in one way, as by being beheaded or strangled, who would not so readily give them up in another, as by being gibbeted alive or crucified. Then, how great was the charity, the kindness, the liberality of the Son of God, who gave not a part or one half, but the whole of his unsearchable riches, and became poor; gave up his honour, and was reproached, insulted, and persecuted; his pleasure and ease, and lived a life of self-denial, crucifixion, labour, toil and hardship, nay, his liberty, and was arrested and bound, and even his life, his soul and body, to suffering, to torture, and to death. — —

Again, it is a further manifestation of his kindness, to consider for whom he gave himself. He gave himself, says the Apostle, “*for us:*” the Creator for the creature, the independent, eternal, infinite, supreme, for created, dependent, short-lived, limited, and subject beings; the mighty and glorious Creator, “the high and lofty one,” who “sitteth on the circle of the heavens,” (Isai. xl. 12: vi. 3,) for mean and worthless, weak and wretched creatures, formed out of the dust, and returning to it; the just and holy Creator, the holy one of God, he that is “holy in all his ways,” &c., for fallen,

depraved, sinful, and guilty creatures; (Rom. v. 6—8; 1 Pet. iii. 18;) the rightful Lord for the refractory and disobedient servant. If instances have occurred of a servant loving his master so well as to part with his ease and comfort, and to hazard his life in his service and for his defence, was it ever known that a lord and master gave his life for his servant? especially for one disobedient and refractory? that a sovereign lawgiver and king gave himself for a contumacious and rebellious subject, who had risen up in arms to dethrone him? if a subject has exposed his life, fought, and died for his king, when did ever a king voluntarily submit to ignominy, torture and death, for the sake of a rebellious subject? (Rom. v. 10.)—This leads me to observe, what is the principal thing meant by his giving himself for us. - that he gave himself for our ransom: his life to ransom our lives; his person to ransom our persons. Our lives, even our everlasting lives, were forfeited and lost, and our persons, our souls, and bodies, were doomed to perish for ever, for we had sinned, and come short of the glory of God, and were exposed, nay, and condemned, to everlasting punishment or destruction, even everlasting misery or the everlasting extinction of our being. But when “all were dead, he died for all,” (2 Cor. v. 14, 15,) “gave himself a ransom for all,” “tasted death for every man,” “died for our sins,” was “delivered for our offences,” suffered the just for the unjust;” when we were yet sinners he died for us. His perfectly innocent, infinitely valuable, and most blessed life, worth more than the lives of all men, yea, of all creatures, was given to ransom ours from justice and wrath. — —

But I am anticipating what belongs to the next particular,

II. THE EXPERIMENTAL RELIGION TO BE BUILT ON THIS FOUNDATION.

“That he might redeem us from all iniquity,” &c. Redemption is twofold: *by price*: of this I have already spoken. We are redeemed by Christ’s blood; (1 Pet. i. 18; 1 Cor. vi. 20;) hereby we have remission, justification, adoption, and a title to eternal life. And *by power*. He redeems us, by the power of his Spirit, from the dominion of iniquity. Man naturally commits sin, and is therefore, the slave of sin, (John viii. 34,) as also of the devil, (Eph. ii. 2;) of the world, (Gal. i. 4,) and of the flesh. (Rom. vii. 23.) But Christ came to set us free, which he does by giving us his Spirit, in consequence of justification: (Rom. viii. 2; 2 Cor. iii. 17;) by bringing us to “know the truth,” (John viii. 32,) and by inspiring us with faith: (1 John v. 4:)—to “purify” us even from the nature of iniquity; we were defiled by the “filthiness of the flesh,” by irregular and immoderate appetites and passions; by the “filthiness of the spirit,” spiritual desires and dispositions, as pride, self-will, discontent, impatience, anger, malice, &c.: this is also by his Spirit, (Tit. iii. 5; Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 26;) through his Word, (Eph. v. 26;) and faith. (Acts xxvi. 18; xv. 9.)—These things must not only be known and believed, but experienced. It is necessary we should experience justification, regeneration, and sanctification. Thus we are become a “peculiar people;” not only a purchased people, (Deut. xxxii. 6,) an acquired people, rescued from Satan, sin, and death, and made “a people who were not a people,” a separate people, having obeyed the apostolic command, (2 Cor. vi. 17,) but also a distin-

guished and remarkable people; for they who are thus justified and sanctified, are not to be every where found, but are “a little flock,” and differ widely from others; a peculiar, or excellent people, “the righteous being more excellent than his neighbour:”—More excellent! Methinks I hear one say they are enthusiasts and fools;—what do they more than others? what better are men for what you call experimental religion, or faith? of what advantage are they to their fellow-creatures?—This will lead me to the last particular.

III. THIS DOCTRINE INCULCATES THE IMPORTANCE OF CHRISTIAN PRACTICE.

They are a people “zealous of good works.”—By good works here, we are not to understand merely or chiefly, such as are negatively good, or not bad; though it be undoubtedly of great importance to avoid doing evil, and to be blameless.—Nor such as are instrumentally good, as by attending the ordinances of God, and using the means of grace, although these also, are of great importance, as means in order to an higher end.—But such as are really good and useful, useful to men’s bodies, as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, &c., or putting the indigent into a way of providing for themselves; (James i. 27; Job xxxi. 16—20; Isai. lviii. 7, 10; Matt. xxv 35;) to their souls, as teaching the ignorant, or contriving that they may be taught, reclaiming the wicked, &c.; these and such like things, tend in a peculiar manner to the glory of God. (Matt. v. 16; John xv. 8; Phil. i. 11.) —

Now what are the grand hinderances to men’s doing these and such like good works?—Ignorance and unbelief, as to the obligation of performing good works, and

that they are the great end of our being, our preservation, and our redemption; that they are enforced by the example of Christ, as well as his love and bounty to us, and by the promise of a most glorious reward.—The guilt of past sin, and condemnation on account of it; burdened and bowed down by this, and the apprehending, perhaps, that we have sinned beyond forgiveness, and that our salvation is now impossible, we have no heart to set about the practice of good works.—The power of sin enfeebling and enslaving us, and absolutely depriving us both of inclination and power to do good works, nay, and perhaps even keeping us employed in bad works.—Corrupt principles and inclinations. The hungry cannot be fed, nor the naked clothed, without parting with our money; covetousness, sensuality, self-indulgence, forbid this: the sick cannot be visited, the ignorant cannot be instructed, the wicked reclaimed, the distressed comforted, &c., without labour and pains; our lukewarmness and sloth forbid this: the wicked cannot be reprov'd, the pernicious maxims and customs of the world opposed, the truths, the people, and cause of God defended and supported, without our incurring reproach and shame; our pride opposes this. — —

And now do you ask, of what use are the faith and experience of the people of God? and what mankind are benefitted by them? Surely they remove all these hinderances of good works, and furnish us with the noblest, the most steady, and most powerful motives and principles of them.—Our acquaintance with, and faith in, the truths of the Gospel, especially such a truth as that Christ “gave himself for us,” removes the first-mentioned impediment, *i. e.*, ignorance, and affords us

all the motives of christian knowledge.—Our experiencing redemption from the guilt of sin removes the second hinderance, the discouragements under which we are naturally placed, and inspires us with gratitude and love; and our language is, “What shall I render to the Lord,” &c.? “if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.”—Our being delivered from the power of iniquity, breaks asunder those chains, and removes that imbecility, which before prevented our efforts to do good, and bound us down to evil works; and we acquire both inclination and power.—Our being purified implies the removal of the corrupt principles above mentioned; as of covetousness, which hindered our giving to those who were in need; of lukewarmness and sloth, which hindered our labouring to do good; of pride, which deterred us from such duties as might lay us open to reproach and contempt.—In consequence of such experience, therefore, christian principles and motives, as faith, hope, love, gratitude, humility, patience, meekness, disinterestedness, self-denial, fortitude, liberality, &c., have their full force; and without these no great good can be done by any one: the Lord also helps our infirmities, and will become our salvation.—Thus do we become “zealous,” not of opinions, modes of worship, forms of church-government, names and parties, but of “good works;” works indisputably and essentially good, and are purified to love and serve Him that gave himself for us, and to live in the constant practice of every virtue and excellence, in imitation of his example. —

CCXIII.

READINESS TO GOOD WORKS EXPLAINED
AND RECOMMENDED.

TITUS iii. 1.

Put them in mind—to be ready to every good work.

IN none of his Epistles, does St. Paul appear more earnest than in this, to inculcate the necessity of adorning the Gospel, by a spirit and behaviour worthy of it, and the practice of all good works. And we learn from the Epistle itself, the reason why this is the case. The believers in Crete, it appears, had been very immoral before their conversion to christianity; and even since their conversion, many of them, and especially such as had been brought up Jews, greatly dishonoured their profession. “The Cretans,” he observes, quoting the saying of one of their poets,* “are always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies.” “This witness is true;” he adds, (ch. i. 12, 13,) and “there are many unruly and vain talkers, and deceivers,” &c. (Ver. 10.) “Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith;”—for “they profess to know God, but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and to every good work reprobate.” (Ver. 13, 16.) Hence the Apostle, having left Titus in Crete, that he might settle such affairs, as he himself had not time to arrange before his departure, commands him to take particular care that such as he might ordain to be pastors, should be “blameless,—sober, just, holy, tem-

* Epimenides.

perate, holding fast the faithful word," according to the teaching of the Apostles. (Ver. 6, 8, 9.) Then, after directing him to give suitable advices to aged men, aged women, young men, young women, and servants, that they "might adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things." (ch. ii. 1—10,) he requires him to put them all "in mind to be subject to principalities and powers; to obey magistrates," and to be "ready to every good work." (Ch. iii. 1.) On this he lays peculiar stress, adding again, after mentioning some considerations most calculated to give weight to his advice, "This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men." (Ver. 8.)—Inquire we,

I. WHAT THIS ADVICE IMPLIES?

What it is to be ready? (*ετοιμος ειναι*.) To "be ready" is to be prepared, by laying a proper foundation in ourselves for doing good works. And this must be by the attainment of divine knowledge and grace.—Knowledge is first necessary. Ignorance unfits and hinders many from doing good works. They know not the nature of good works, their necessity, that without them "faith is dead," their utility, amiable character, the will of God on this subject, nor how they may perform their duty in this respect. Of very great importance is the knowledge of divine things in general, and of this subject in particular. For want of it, acts of a bad tendency have not unfrequently been performed as good works; as monastic endowments, bequests for praying souls out of purgatory, &c., or works of an

indifferent and trivial nature have been substituted for good ones. The will of God is the rule, and the love of God is the motive, to all good works; this will we must know, and from this motive we must do them; not to merit acceptance with God, but to manifest our gratitude to him that we are accepted, justified, and saved by the Lord Jesus Christ; not to advance our own interest and honour, but to glorify God.—By the attainment of grace: (2 Cor. ix. 8;) pardoning grace; a consciousness of guilt burdening and discouraging the mind, and hindering good works: renewing grace; only a good tree bringeth forth good fruit, only a new heart and nature producing a new life and new actions: strengthening grace; enabling us to break, or shake off, the fetters of sin, which incapacitate us to do the will of God, in this respect, to resist the subtilty and power of Satan, to overcome the world, as to its smiles and frowns, the love of money, honour, pleasure, and ease, to conquer the affections and lusts of the flesh, and giving effect to principles and motives revealed in the Gospel. — —

To “be ready,” is to be disposed to do good works, through that lively, operative faith, which is “the evidence of things not seen,” (Heb. xi. 1,) which realizes the invisible and eternal world, and the rewards of it: through a lively hope of immortality, and that our “labour shall not be in vain:” (1 Cor. xv. 58:) through gratitude for benefits received: through love to God because of his love to us: through zeal for his glory and honour: through love to mankind, and concern for their salvation. — —

To “be ready,” is to have ability for good works; ability to begin and persevere in them. To which hu-

mility is necessary, pride being a great hinderance to many good works, as the seeking out the poor and afflicted in lanes, cellars, &c., the instruction of poor children, &c.: a meek and quiet spirit; many being discouraged and hindered by reproach and provocation, especially when proceeding from the objects of their charity, &c.: patience; all good works, especially instructing children, requiring great patience: resolution; which not being fixed, "our goodness will be as the morning cloud;" we shall not be steadfast and unmoveable: courage and firmness of mind; for if we shrink back from difficulties, we shall do little good: sobriety, which prepares both our bodies and minds by vigour, for labour and active service; by temperance in meat, drink, sleep, and other gratifications; by self-denial, by taking up the cross, and enduring hardness, for delicacy and effeminacy are great hinderances. As to our circumstances; industry, diligence, frugality, economy, are necessary; otherwise we shall have but little to give. As to our situation, we must shun those employments, connections, places, which prevent or obstruct our doing good; contriving, as far as may be, to have time and opportunity, wasting no time in pleasures, amusements, idleness, &c., and redeeming or buying up as much as possible from the hands of sloth and sin; being awake and watchful, to discern and embrace all opportunities of usefulness, taking time by the forelock, and not neglecting a good work to-day, in expectation of doing one to-morrow. — —

II. THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING THUS READY.

The glory of God is herein greatly concerned; (Matt. v. 16; John xv. 8; Phil. i. 11;) God is glorified by our

holy tempers, and heavenly affections, but especially by our substantial, good, and useful works. Great credit and honour is thus brought to the Gospel.—The good of our fellow-creatures is concerned, in soul and spiritual matters, in body and temporal matters; their health, property, character. “These things are profitable to men,” by lessening their miseries, or preventing or enabling them to obtain happiness.

Our own good is involved herein. It is an evidence of our sincerity, and of the genuineness of our religion, to ourselves and others; an evidence of our repentance, faith, hope, love, our justification, regeneration, and growth in grace. Our own peace of mind, as well as our religious character, is involved in this point.—It is the means of exercising our grace and gifts, and thereby retaining them. (Matt. xiii. 12; John xv. 2.) It is the means of increasing our grace and gifts, (John xv. 2; Matt. xiii. 12; 2 Cor. ix. 8—11,) and universal holiness in heart and life.—Hereby we have the comfort of knowing we do not live in vain, and are not in the way to be cast out of the vineyard here, and excluded from heaven hereafter, as unprofitable servants.—Our reward in eternity will be in proportion to our labour in well-doing. (Heb. vi. 10; Gal. vi. 9; Rev. xxii. 12; 1 Cor. iii. 8; 2 Cor. ix. 6.) — —

III. THE MEANS TO BE USED IN ORDER THAT THIS ADVICE MAY BE COMPLIED WITH.

The word of God is the chief means of knowledge and of grace, whereby we may have the preparation, inclination, and ability mentioned above for every good work. (2 Tim. iii. 15—17.) This must be heard, read, searched, and diligently studied. It must also be re-

ceived in faith and in love, be obeyed in an humble and submissive spirit, through the influence and succour of the Holy Spirit.—This, the Holy Spirit, is the great and efficient agent in this work, the spring and source of all good works, of grace, and of all the graces recommended above. (2 Cor. ix. 8.) This Spirit must be sought in sincere, fervent, and importunate prayer, without which we shall not possess either the right disposition, or sufficient ability to do good works.—Christian fellowship is a further means. We must “exhort one another” daily, (Heb. x. 25,) and take example from such as appear, or have appeared, eminent in usefulness, whether they be living or departed saints. (Heb. vi. 10—12)—Finally we must consider that the time is short. — —

CCXIV.

BELIEVERS MUST MAINTAIN GOOD WORKS.

TITUS iii. 8.

This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, That they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men.

In this manner does the Apostle direct Titus, how to raise the superstructure of christianity, and improve the faith of the Gospel to practical purposes; the purposes for which, as he and the other inspired penmen have repeatedly declared, it is given to mankind. But he does not do this till he has first shown how the founda-

tion of that superstructure must be laid, in bringing mankind to a saving acquaintance with themselves, and with the Saviour of lost sinners. In what an admirable manner does he do this in the preceding verses! how concisely, and yet how clearly, and how fully! (See ver. 1—8.)—In respect of the importance of this subject; it is declared, “This is a faithful saying;” a true saying, a doctrine which may be depended upon, as absolutely certain: an important saying; (1 Tim. i. 15: iv. 8, 9; 2 Tim. ii. 11:) and therefore to be “affirmed,” confidently, earnestly, and continually. (See Gr.)—It is matter of thankfulness, that those who preach to you the word of life do not omit, and that you do not wish them to omit, the inculcation of this doctrine. And, I am inclined to think, from considering this, and other similar passages of Holy Writ, that so far from being ashamed of our conduct in this particular, as though we had gone too far, we may have reason to acknowledge, with shame to ourselves, that we had not gone far enough in our statements on this subject. Let us inquire,

I. TO WHOM THE APOSTLE WOULD HAVE THE CHARGE CONTAINED IN OUR TEXT GIVEN?

To those “who have believed in God.” Faith in the one living and true God must be considered as opposed to atheism.—The Apostle does not direct this doctrine to be inculcated on atheists: if any such there be, or ever were, who do not believe there is a God; for with regard to such, there is no ground to proceed upon in inculcating good works, as they can have no proper sense of the difference of doing good and bad works, at least no further than relates to the influence of their actions on civil society, or on their families and parti-

cular individuals, as to the present life. Disbelieving the being and attributes of God, they must also disbelieve his superintending providence over the affairs of this world, and a future state of recompence hereafter; of course they can fear no punishment from God, whose existence they deny, as the consequence of their neglecting good works; nor hope for any reward as the fruit of doing them, either in this life or another. And if we have no foundation for inculcating them at all on such persons, much less for inculcating them from a right principle, love to God; to a right end, his glory; by a right rule, his will; or in a right spirit, the spirit of humility, condescension, kindness, and long-suffering. Nevertheless, it is allowed such persons may do good action from custom, if in any place they are made of much account, from fear of the censures or desire of the praises of men, from a view to their temporal advantages; or, which is yet better, from humanity. But none of these are Divine motives; they do not imply any thing peculiar to religion. Hence, works done from such motives, proceeding neither from faith in God, nor the fear nor love of God, do not glorify him, nor tend to make him known, and therefore cannot please him. (Heb. xi. 6.)—What I have said of atheists may, in substance, be said of polytheists and idolaters, who worship many or false gods.—He that cometh to God with acceptance, “must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” This is faith in God, in the lowest sense, and the lowest in which the Apostle can be understood; (Rom. x. 14;) a belief in, or a persuasion of, his being, attributes, over-ruling providence, and a future state. This was the faith of the ancient patriarchs before and after the

flood: Abel, (Heb. xi. 4,) Enoch, (ver. 5,) Abraham, (ver. 8,) Moses. (Ver. 24—27.) This was also the faith of the good heathen, as Socrates or Cornelius, derived partly from tradition, like the ancient patriarchs, and partly from the works of creation, and the dispensations of providence. They learned the being and attributes of God, and that he governs the world. Hence they inferred the excellency and necessity of good works, and might do them from a persuasion of their excellency and utility; or from fear of punishment, if they neglected them, or the hope of a reward in doing them. Such, like Cornelius, if faithful to their light, we may believe, are led to further knowledge. — — Faith in God's revealed will. The original words are, (*πεπιστευκοτες τω Θεω*;) *who have believed God*, i. e., with respect to the revelation which he has given of his mind and will. This faith, which hath Divine revelation for its object, is opposed to infidelity in all its branches. The Scriptures are believed on the evidence of the internal excellency of their doctrines, precepts, and promises; of the miracles performed, and prophecies fulfilled. — — This includes faith in all the great and essential doctrines of the Gospel; this faith, firmly crediting what God hath revealed, is opposed to Socinianism, for it acknowledges the fall of man, and the natural depravity of human nature, the atonement, the necessity of Divine influences: to Pharisaism, for it allows that by grace we are saved: to Antinomianism, for it confesses that no faith availeth except that which worketh, (Jam. ii. 17;) to formality, for it believes that faith, if it save, must "work by love." (1 John iv. 8; 1 Cor. xiii. 3.) This faith is well defined, 1 Thess. i. 5.— By this faith the motives of good works above-mention-

ed receive great additional strength, because the superintending providence of God, his making "all things work for our good," and blessing our liberality, the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the body, and a future judgment, are hereby clearly ascertained to us. Hereby also we are furnished with new motives: for this faith assures us, not only that we are fallen, but also that we are redeemed; and it shows us that "God is in Christ reconciling all things to himself," and thus lays a foundation of confidence towards God, and opens a source of gratitude and love to him for our redemption in Christ. (1 John iv. 9—11, 16, 19.)—This is chiefly meant here; faith in God, as reconciled to us in Christ; faith justifying the ungodly, and sanctifying the unholiness; as is manifest from the context; and this faith implies a just and scriptural confidence in God's pardoning mercy, and renewing grace in Christ, and in his promises, which we embrace, from the persuasion of their certain truth. (Heb. xi. 13.) It produces a lively hope of eternal life, being the means by which we become the children of God; love to God and man, and a change of heart. Thus the hope of a future reward has full force; fear also, a jealous fear, of forfeiting our title to the promised inheritance (Heb. iv. 1) is strengthened, and we are furnished with the best motive to exertion, viz. *love*. Hence too, our nature being changed, we can do good works as naturally as a good tree brings forth good fruit; (Eph. ii. 10; John xv. 5;) and can do them in a right manner, with humility, patience, meekness, and long suffering. — — The charge here given, we may observe, is addressed even to deists, but especially to christians, even if nominal; above all, to those who have living faith, and are the children of

God. These are capable of doing acts of goodness from the best motive, to the best end, and in the best manner. — —

II. WHAT THIS CHARGE IMPLIES?

That they be “careful to maintain good works.” Good works is the subject of it.—These must be distinguished from works of an evil nature, as intemperance, immorality, profaneness. “Cease to do evil, learn to do well.” (Isai. i. 16, 17.)—Blamelessness, (*καλα εργα*,) to maintain an unblameable and becoming conduct; (Phil. ii. 15; i. 27; iv. 8;) that, towards ourselves we live soberly, towards our neighbours righteously in the practice of truth and justice; towards God, godly.—Especially good works; that is, such as are useful, by which a good man is distinguished from a righteous man, (Rom. v. 7,) and a useful from an unprofitable servant by our Lord. The use of the means of grace, and attending the ordinances of God, private or public: these are useful to ourselves and to others, by way of example; works of mercy and charity towards our neighbour; doing good to him, as to his character, property, his body, and especially his soul. These are generally meant in Scripture by good works. (Acts ix. 36; 2 Cor. ix. 8; 1 Tim. v. 10.) These, when done by the professors of true religion, tend peculiarly to glorify God, (Matt. v. 16,) to make him known, and to produce in others the fear and love of him. (1 Pet. ii. 11, 12.)—“That they be careful,” (*ινα φροντιζωσι*) to think, much thought being necessary to contrive, to observe, and watch for opportunities, and be careful to embrace them as believing they will return no more if suffered to pass unimproved.—“To maintain,” (*πρoιστα-*

σθαί,) to excel. A deist, who believes there is a God, should excel an atheist, who believes there is none,—otherwise, what good does his faith in God do him? • A christian should excel a deist; and a real christian a mere nominal one. This will infallibly be the case if, and as far as, faith is lively, and of Divine operation.—Consider we,

III. THE REASON OF THIS CHARGE.

“These things are good,” &c.—(καλά,) *excellent*. in themselves; not dung, or dross, or filthy rags, but gold, silver, and precious stones: how excellent they are, appears, in that they are the end of man’s redemption, (Tit. ii. 14.) of his new creation, (Eph. ii. 10,) and of his preservation: (Luke xiii. 6; Matt. iii. 10:)—*amiable*, and that in the eyes of God, angels and men, good and even bad men: (Job xxix. 11—17:—*honourable* to the profession which we make, and for God’s honour. Therefore we shall do these, if we have any regard to God’s glory, and wish to recommend the Gospel. — —

They are “profitable to men;” not to God; there can be no merit to man, in our works, in respect to God; but to men, to others, as lessening, removing, or preventing their miseries; directing, inclining, or enabling them to attain happiness, or increasing the happiness they possess; therefore good works should be done from love to our neighbour, and will be done, if we have that love: “profitable” to ourselves; *now*, in temporal things, for “to him that hath shall be given;” and in spiritual things, for if we do not bring forth this fruit, we shall be cut off from Christ; and, on the other hand, while exercising our faith, hope, &c., in doing good, these graces will be increased, and also our gifts: (John

xv. 2:) this indeed is the greatest means of grace: *hereafter*; for whatever increases our holiness, increases our glory, our reward being according to our works. (Rev. xx. 12; xxii. 12; Heb. vi. 10; 1 Cor. xv. 56; 2 Cor. ix. 6.) Therefore we shall do good works if we be properly concerned for our own welfare, here and hereafter. Such, it seems, were the considerations which influenced holy men of old, as Job. (Ch. xxxi. 13—23.)—And such are the considerations which influenced those who first instituted, and who still support, the excellent charity I have now to recommend to your liberality.—

CCXV.

THE GOSPEL IMPORTANT, FROM THE INFINITE DIGNITY OF ITS AUTHOR.

HEBREWS i. 1—4.

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.

As the grand design of the Author of this Epistle throughout, was to guard the believing Hebrews against apostatizing from the faith of the Gospel, or neglecting it, and to engage them to constancy in their attachment to it, and its fundamental doctrines; so, in order

to this, he labours to convince them of its pre-eminent importance. He shows them, that however important they might consider the revelations made of old, and the whole Mosaic dispensation, the Gospel is far more important; the former revelations being but preparatory to it, and the old dispensation but a shadow and figure of the new. But his chief arguments are drawn from the immediate Author of the Gospel, the promised Messiah, the Son of God. Because he is more glorious, infinitely more glorious, than any preceding messenger of God, whether patriarch, priest, prophet, or angel, by whom God had spoken of old; the great Jewish lawgiver, Moses himself, not excepted: therefore his revelation is proportionably of greater consequence than theirs, and his salvation than the temporal salvations wrought for Israel of old; and ought, consequently, to be more diligently regarded and laid to heart.—This is a point, my brethren, little understood, or considered amongst us, viz. the vast importance of the Gospel, its incomparable worth and excellency. Hence, infidelity on the one hand, and apostacy on the other, with a general lukewarmness towards, and indifferency about, things for which the Son of God became incarnate, and for which he shed his precious blood. With a view to apply some antidote to this growing evil, and, especially to impress upon your minds the reasonableness and necessity of giving yet “more earnest heed to the things you have heard,” I have chosen the verses now read as the subject of our present discourse. We are informed in these words,

I. OF A NEW REVELATION, FROM THE SAME GOD WHO “AT SUNDRY TIMES, &c. SPAKE UNTO THE FATHERS.”

There was much wisdom in the Apostle, writing as he was to the Hebrews, who were prejudiced against him, as one who departed from Moses and the prophets, in signifying, at the very beginning of his Epistle, that he believed the revelations given them of old. Thus he prepared them to receive the important truths contained in this Epistle, a summary of which we have in my text.

God “spake at sundry times;” before the flood, by Enoch, (Jude 14;) and Noah, (2 Pet. ii. 5;) after the flood, by Abraham, “a prophet,” (Gen. xx. 7,) who “commanded his children and his household;” (Gen. xviii. 19;) by Jacob, prophesying to his sons of things to come; (Gen. xlix. 1;) by Moses in the wilderness; by Deborah, and Samuel, in the time of the Judges; by Nathan, during the reigns of David and Solomon; by Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel in the time of the kings; by Daniel, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, after the captivity.— — Or, he spake (*πολλοῖς χρόνοις*) in *sundry parts*, parcels, or degrees, in opposition to a complete revelation; every subsequent revelation communicating more than the preceding. Thus to Adam, victory over the grand enemy of mankind by “the Seed of the woman” was promised; to Abraham, that all mankind should be blessed in him and his seed; to Jacob, that he should be a peaceful prince, “unto whom the gathering of the people should be;” by Moses, that he should be an extraordinary prophet, the disobeying of whom would be punished with certain destruction; by David, that he should be a priest of a higher order than that of Aaron, and a king in Zion, whose dominion should “extend from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth;” (Ps. lxxii.

1, 8;) by Isaiah, that he should be “the Child born, the Son given,” and yet “the mighty God, of the increase of whose government and peace there should be no end;” that he should go through scenes of great suffering, (ch. liii.) but should expiate sin and conquer death: by Jeremiah, that he should be “the Lord our righteousness:” by Ezekiel, the “one shepherd” of God’s people: (ch. xxxiv. 23;) by Zechariah, that he should “build the temple of the Lord, bear the glory, and be a priest upon his throne;” (Zech. vi. 13;) from whence, according to Joel, he “should pour out his Spirit,” in an extraordinary measure, upon his disciples: by Haggai and Malachi, that he “should suddenly come to the temple,” built after the return from Babylon, and that awful judgments should follow his coming upon such as rejected him.—“In divers manners;” in a cloud, by fire, by a small voice: in dreams, visions and voices; (Num. xii. 6—8;) dreams, (Gen. xviii. 12; 1 Kings iii. 5;) visions, (Gen. xv. 1; Dan. viii. 1, 2; Zech. i. 7;) voices; (1 Sam. iii. 4;) appearances of angels, (Gen. xviii. 2;) of the Lord in a human form, (Gen. xviii. 10—22;) as to Moses, (Exod. xxxiii. 11;) [respecting the sense in which he was seen, and in which he was not, see Num. xii. 8; John i. 18:] by urim and thummim; by immediate inspiration of his Spirit (2 Pet. i. 21; 1 Pet. i. 11.)—That he actually spoke in these ways we know, because various predictions uttered have been already fulfilled.—But, “in these last days,” the times of the Messiah, (2 Tim. iii. 1,) he hath spoken again, and given further revelation, much more perfect than any preceding.—More clear, even respecting things formerly revealed; as, for instance, God’s spiritual nature, (John iv. 24.) and some of his attributes, particu-

larly—his love; the fall and depravity of man; his redemption; the person, offices, and work of the Redeemer; the salvation that is through him, especially as it is future and eternal; that it is attained by faith, the fruits of which, and the spirituality of God's law, are set forth in a much clearer point of view in the Gospel than formerly.—More full, giving us explicit information of things hardly intimated before, as the abolition of the Jewish dispensation, the temporary rejection of their nation, because of their unbelief, a general and solemn judgment, that the consequences of it will be eternal, that the heavens and the earth shall be destroyed, and a new heaven and a new earth shall be prepared, as an habitation for the righteous.— — More satisfactory: the former dispensations might be compared to star-light or moon-light; this last revelation is called “the day-spring from on high visiting us,” (Luke i. 78, 79,) and “the Sun of Righteousness arising upon us,” (Mal. iv. 2.)—That we may have greater assurance of the certain truth and infinite importance of the things revealed, may be induced to receive them with attention, reverence, and seriousness, to give most earnest heed to them, and comply with them, and that we may perceive the fearful consequences of rejecting, slighting, neglecting, or disobeying them; the messenger of this new covenant is the Son of God, to whom God's will was known, not by dreams, visions, voices, &c. or in any of the ways before mentioned, but, as St. John speaks, he “was in the bosom of the Father,” that is, was intimately and perfectly acquainted with his eternal mind and counsels, being his wisdom, word, and truth, and therefore,

fully qualified to give mankind a revelation every way perfect and complete. — — This leads me to speak of,

II. THE CHARACTER AND DIGNITY OF THE PERSON BY WHOM THE REVELATION WAS MADE.

“God—hath spoken unto us by his Son;” a Son infinitely near and dear to his infinite and everlasting Father; his beloved Son, the Son of his love. His Son in a peculiar sense.—Not by adoption, regeneration, or title, as patriarchs, prophets, or any other saints may be so described, for he is clearly distinguished from all these. (Mark xii. 6.) Not by the resurrection merely, by which the saints will hereafter be manifested to be the sons of God. (Luke xx. 36; Rom. viii. 19.) He is distinguished from Moses and Elias on the mount of transfiguration, who had both entered the immortal state. (Matt. xvii. 5.) Not by creation, as Adam was, (Luke iii. 38,) and angels are God’s sons, for he is here represented as having a right to the name of Son by inheritance, which the angels have not. Hence he is termed, *the only-begotten of the Father*; an expression which excludes from the same honour angels and all other beings whatever. (Ver. 4, 5.) He is termed (*ἰδιον, υἱον,*) his proper Son, (Rom. viii. 3, 32,) an expression most emphatically marking the high sense in which he is related to the Father.—So a son as to be “heir of all things;” that is, of the whole creation; of all creatures, visible and invisible, which were all made *for him*, as well as *by him*. (Col. i. 16.) God appointed him the heir long before he made the worlds. Crellius, a noted Socinian, with whom some other Socinians have agreed, allowed that Christ had the highest dominion and empire over men and angels;

but still they would persuade us that all this is spoken of him as a mere man, as the son of Mary. But how a mere man, or mere creature, should have this empire over all men and all creatures in the universe; how he should even know them all, and have power over death, is as impossible to understand as the mystery of the Incarnation, or that of the Trinity.—But to guard us against this error, the inspired writers have taken care to inform us that he existed before he was born of Mary, “before Abraham,” (John viii. 58,) “before all things;” (Col. i. 17;) that he was loved by the Father, and had glory with him “before the foundation of the world:” (John xvii. 5, 24:) nay, and, as the Apostle here asserts, that “the worlds were made” by him. It is true the word (*αιωνας*,) here used by the Apostle, may be rendered *ages*, or *dispensations*, yet in Heb. xi. 3, it must mean, as it is rendered, *worlds*: and we know, from John i. 3, 10, Col. i. 16, Eph. iii. 9, 1 Cor. viii. 6, and ver. 10 of this chapter, that the Son of God did in fact make the worlds. Well then might he be appointed the heir and lord of the worlds which he had formed.—Nay, and he “upholds” and governs “all things,” and that in the most divine manner, “by the word of his power.” (*φερων τε τα παντα*.) See Col. i. 17.—But are his personal and inherent properties equal to these wonderful works and offices? Yes: for he is “the brightness of his Father’s glory;” (see Wisd. vii. 25, 26;)—the outbeaming, emanation, or effulgence of the Father’s glory. In and by him the glorious nature and attributes of God have shone forth, probably to angels, at least to men, as on mount Sinai, when his “voice shook the earth.” (Heb. xii. 26.) They shone forth among the children of Israel, in the tabernacle and

temple. (See Exod. xxiv. 10, comp. with John i. 18; 1 Tim. vi. 16.) Isaiah's vision (ch. vi.) is expressly said to have been a vision of Christ. (John xii. 41.) Thus he appeared of old in "the form of God." (Phil. ii. 6.) In the days of his flesh, the divine glory shone forth at his transfiguration; and in his whole ministry. his discourses, and miracles, in his holy and benevolent actions. &c., he showed the wisdom, power, and goodness of God. Hence his words to Thomas and Philip. (John xiv. 7—11.) After his ascension, he re-assumed, and always appeared in his original glory. Thus Stephen and Paul saw him.—The *character*, or "express delineation," (so Doddridge,) on whom his likeness is stamped in living characters, in a manner no created nature can admit. The word rendered person, (ὑποστάσις,) means subsistence, or substance, with all its properties. Christ is the character (expressam imaginem (Erasmus,) insculptum forma. (Beza.) In Christo, Deo conspicuo, vivum, expressum, insculptum Dei illius optimi maximi vultum contemplor, deosculor, amplector;) corresponding to all the divine perfections, as the impression on the wax to the engraving of the seal. He represents and exhibits the fulness of the Deity, which dwells in him.—He not only resembles, but is God. (ὁπαρχων ἐν μορφῇ Θεοῦ.) Thus Heb. i. 8, 12; Ps. cii. 25; John i. 1.—Hence he is worshipped even by angels, (ver. 6,) much more by men.—

Yet, glorious as he is, and has ever been, we observe,

III. HIS CONDESCENSION AND LOVE IS SO GREAT, THAT BY HIS SUFFERINGS AND DEATH HE HATH "PURGED OUR SINS," AND THAT (καὶ ἑαυτὸν) "BY HIMSELF."

This implies, his emptying himself; (ἐκένωσεν, Phil. ii. 7;) his assuming our nature, with its various infirmities

and sorrows; his taking upon him, and engaging to answer for, our sins, which were “laid on him,” (Isai. liii. 6,) and he *bore* them; (1 Pet. ii. 24; Heb. ix. 28;) they were chastised (Isai. liii. 5,) or punished on him; he was “wounded,” “bruised,” “put to grief,” “made an offering” for them: he hath expiated and put them away, with respect to all that repent and believe in him. (2 Cor. v. 19—21.)—He has procured the Holy Spirit to sprinkle our conscience, and take away the power, and purge the pollution of sin. [Here must be shown the necessity of repentance, and faith, and new obedience, that we may obtain and retain an interest in this purgation of sins and its consequences; and also the easiness of these conditions.] —

IV HIS SUBSEQUENT EXALTATION TO SUPREME DOMINION, AND UNLIMITED POWER AND GLORY.

“He sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.” This is explained further Heb. viii. 1; and especially Eph. i. 20—23; 1 Pet. iii. 22. Some understand this of the right hand of the glorious manifestation of the Father, which they suppose he makes of himself in heaven, as he appeared in the shekinah on earth; the spirituality of his nature not permitting us otherwise to speak with propriety of his right or left hand. It is certain Christ is invested, even in his human nature, with the highest authority, next to his Father, over angels and men. This is—in reward of his sufferings and death; (Phil. ii. 5—11;)—for the benefit of his church, passing into heaven, as the High Priest into the holy of holies, (Heb. iv 14; viii. 1,) to appear in the presence of God as our advocate, intercessor, and forerunner: (see Zech. vi. 12, 13:)—to subdue his

enemies, “waiting till they become his footstool:” (Heb. x. 13; 1 Cor. xv. 25—28:—to govern his church and the world: (Ps. cx. 2; Isai. ix. 6:)—to judge all, (Rom. xiv. 9—12:)—to reward his faithful people, and punish the wicked. — —

INFERENCES.

Is the New Testament revelation from the same God who spake by the patriarchs and prophets? Then let us not set the one revelation against the other, but put both in their proper places, and give to both a due regard, using the law as “a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ.”—Is the revelation of the gospel incomparably more clear, full, and important, than any made before, or that ever will be made? Then shall we reject, or even neglect it? shall we not accept it, and that with humility, conscious of our unworthiness, and with gratitude, considering the value of the benefits it offers to us?—Is he, by whom God has given this revelation, so glorious a person? Then shall we not receive it with reverence and seriousness?—Is he the wisdom and word of God incarnate, and is the divine wisdom shown forth, and the divine word spoken in it? and is it of infinite importance to our salvation? Then shall we not “give earnest heed” to it, and labour to acquaint ourselves perfectly with it?—Is he the “truth of God,” and has his revelation been sealed by his blood, and confirmed by miracles, &c.? Then ought we not to comply with all its demands; believing firmly its doctrines, obeying heartily its precepts, embracing its promises, and standing in awe of its threatenings?—Ought we not to give diligence in the use of all proper means, as of hearing, reading, meditation, prayer, &c. that

these ends may be answered?—Has he purged our sins? then what encouragement have we to approach and serve God through him; and should not gratitude influence?—Is he on the right hand of God? then how perilous to disobey him? (Ps. ii. 12.) — —

CCXVI.

MORE EARNEST ATTENTION REQUIRED TO THE GOSPEL ON ACCOUNT OF ITS PECU- LIAR EXCELLENCE.

HEBREWS ii. 1.

Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.

THERE are three evils, which in this age and nation we have especially to deplore, respecting the religion of Jesus; infidelity, apostacy, and lukewarmness: infidelity with respect to such as never really believed the truth as it is in Jesus; apostacy with respect to those, who did once believe, but have declined from the faith; and lukewarmness with regard to those who still, in a sense, do believe, but are too indifferent about the great and momentous matters to which they continue to declare their assent. Now, all these evils arise from one source, from ignorance of the Gospel; of its truth, and of the evidence whereby that truth is supported; of its excellency, its incomparable worth and blessed tendency; of its importance, its vast consequence and absolute necessity. The words of my text, considered in connexion with the context, contain a sufficient anti-

dote against these evils, especially the last of them, which most affects ourselves, and by which we are most in danger of suffering.—You will easily observe, that these words are an inference from the contents of the preceding chapter, which sets forth, in very clear and forcible language, and with demonstrative evidence and proof from the Old Testament, the true character and high dignity of the Messiah, the Son of God, the immediate Author of the Gospel. And the Apostle's argument is, that seeing the Gospel hath such a great and glorious author, we ought to give the more earnest heed to it, more than they gave of old to the law, which had not so great an author, which was immediately given by Moses, and not by the Son of God; and more than we ourselves have formerly given to the Gospel itself, when we were less acquainted with its excellency and importance: we ought to take care that we neither forfeit nor lose our interest in it. But inquire we,

I. WHAT IS THE SUBJECT MATTER OF THE EXHORTATION? WHAT ARE THE THINGS WE HAVE HEARD?

The exhortation refers to the doctrines of the Gospel, and the manner of their communication, viz., by preaching.

The doctrines of the Gospel, or the things themselves revealed therein, are what we have heard. Now that we may judge how far they are worthy of attention, we must consider their truth, their importance, and their excellency.—The first requisite in any message, declaration or doctrine, offered to our consideration, is its truth. What is false is worthy of no attention. The Gospel is from him, who is the Amen, the faithful wit-

ness, the truth itself; it is proved to us to be true by his holy life, sufferings, and death, his resurrection, his miracles, and prophecies fulfilled.—But all things that are true are not worthy of peculiar attention; we must therefore show their importance, which may be argued from the glory and dignity of the person revealing them, who would not be employed in delivering a trivial message; (ch. i. 2—10;) from the truths themselves, giving us information concerning the greatest, best, and most important things;—Concerning ourselves, what we were when first created, what we are now, and may become hereafter;—concerning the author of our being, his nature and attributes, his works, dispensations, and the relations wherein he is pleased to stand to us;—concerning the Mediator between God and man, his mysterious person, his glorious characters, and important offices; his marvellous undertaking, his unspeakable love, his extreme sufferings, his astonishing humiliation and exaltation;—concerning the way of salvation through faith in him, and the will of God respecting us, our duty, and our happiness;—concerning our many, subtle, powerful, and malicious enemies, the danger we are in from them, and how we may be secured against them;—concerning our prospects after death, the certainty and infinity of a life to come, the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the body, the solemn and final judgment, the future and eternal world, and the boundless and everlasting rewards or punishments awaiting us.—Now we can hardly question the inconceivable magnitude and importance of all these things, or the satisfactory nature of the information given to us about them.—Observe also the excellency of these things in themselves. being light of light, an

efflux from the Almighty, waters of life, pure streams from the everlasting fountain of truth, knowledge, and wisdom.—All the truths, precepts, or promises of the Gospel are enlightening and enlarging, ennobling and exalting, refining and purifying, quickening and comforting, in their effect. — —

The manner in which this doctrine is communicated. The Apostle speaks of “the things heard.” “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” (Rom. x. 15.) And herein he magnifies the great ordinance of preaching as above every thing else; he maketh it the great means of begetting faith in men. He insists not only on the things themselves wherein they had been instructed, but also the way whereby these things had been imparted. This, as the means of their believing, as the ground of their profession, they were diligently to remember and attend to.—We proceed to consider,

II. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN GIVING EARNEST HEED TO THEM, AND HOW IT APPEARS THAT WE OUGHT TO GIVE MORE EARNEST HEED.

We must be deeply sensible of their truth, importance and excellency. It is observed by a great critic, that the original word, (*προσσεγγειν*,) denotes such an attendance to any thing as proceeds from an estimation and value of it answerable to its worth. If we have not a proper value of the Gospel, as that in which our chief interest lies, we shall not attend to it as we ought. The field wherein the pearl of great price is, must be valued above all other possessions whatever. They who esteem not the marriage-feast above all other avocations and worldly concerns, were shut out as un-

worthy. If the Gospel be not more to us, than all the world beside, we shall never persevere in a right profession of it. A deep persuasion of the necessity, worth, glory, and excellency of the Gospel, especially on account of its Author, and the grace dispensed in it, is the first step to that diligent heeding of it here required.—We must not in fact be indifferent, but deeply concerned that the Gospel may be so known and experienced, as to have its proper influence upon us. We must take all opportunities of hearing, reading, and meditating on these things, (Luke viii. 18; Jam. i. 21;) diligently considering and “pondering them in our hearts,” (Luke ii. 19,) and making them the matter of our meditation even in the midst of worldly business; (Ps. cxix. 11; Deut. vi. 6;) searching into the mind of God. The Gospel is the wisdom of God, and we must search into it as “for hid treasure.” (Prov. ii. 4.)—We must frequently examine ourselves respecting our knowledge, experience, and practice of these things: must look to the Lord in prayer, sincere, fervent, and constant, that he would open our hearts, as he did Lydia’s, to receive the word in faith and love, (Heb. iv. 2;) that it may be an engrafted word. Believing is the end of hearing: to hear and not believe, is like seeing meat and not eating it.—We must not rest till we thoroughly understand, experience and practise the truth, and express the word received, by a conformity of heart and life to it.—We must be cast into the mould of the Gospel: it must leave upon our hearts an impression of its own likeness, the express image of that holiness, purity, and wisdom which it revealeth. This is “beholding with open face the glory of the Lord,” &c. (2 Cor. iii. 18.) When the heart of the hearer is

so animated and governed by christian truths, as to be moulded and formed into their likeness, to produce a conversation becoming the Gospel, then is the word attended to in a right manner.—We must use means to have divine truths always in remembrance, ready for use, and must continually reduce them to practice.

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But the Apostle requires, that we “give *more* earnest heed,” &c. more than they gave of old to Moses and the Prophets:—because the revelations made to us are more clear, more full, and more excellent: we have greater encouragement to give heed to them, and shall be amply requited if we do, by the greater information, and other happy effects to be produced:—because of the great dignity of the Person speaking; we owe attention to an inferior. if what he says be important and interesting to us, more to an equal, more still to a superior, to a nobleman, a prince, a king, an angel.

— — How great and earnest heed is due to the Son of God! “Hear ye him.” We owe him peculiar attention, out of reverence to him, because he is a person of such great excellence, dignity, and authority; out of love, because he hath done so much for us in purging our sins by his precious blood; out of fear, knowing that he is the “King of kings and Lord of lords,” has “the keys of death and hell,” is our Lawgiver and our Judge; out of hope, because our final sentence will be pronounced, and our eternal reward conferred by his hand.—

But who ought to give this more earnest heed? “*Ἦς*” (*οὐδὲν ἡμῶς*;) it behoveth us particularly, who believe all this of him respecting his personal dignity, and the important offices he sustains, and the incom-

parable blessings of his Gospel; who have known and experienced the enlightening, renovating, and comforting influences of these truths. We, above all others, are inexcusable, if we do not attend to them.

III. THE REASON, MOTIVE, OR END, OF THIS EXHORTATION:

“Lest at any time we should let them slip;” (παρρησιάζεσθαι;) as leaky vessels, which let the water, poured into them in one way, run out in many ways. It is our duty to retain the “words which we have heard,” and therefore it is not said, that the water *flows out*, but that we, as it were, *pour it out*; losing that negligently which we ought to have retained. And, says Dr. Owen, “there is an elegant metaphor in the word, for as the drops of rain falling on the earth water it, and make it fruitful, so does the celestial doctrine make fruitful unto God the souls of men upon whom it descends, and hence, with respect to the word of the Gospel, Christ is said to ‘come down as the *showers on the mown grass*,’ (Ps. lxxii. 6.) And the Apostle calls preaching the Gospel *watering* men, (1 Cor. iii. 6, 7,) and compares them to whom it is preached to ‘*the earth that drinketh in the rain*.’ (Heb. vi. 7.) Hence men are here said to pour out the word preached, when by negligence they lose, instead of retaining the benefit of the Gospel. So when our Lord compares the same word to seed, he illustrates men’s falling from it, by all the ways and means whereby seed cast into the earth may be lost, or become unprofitable.” As water is lost gradually out of a leaky vessel, so the remembrance of, and faith in, the truths of the Gospel, with their en-

lightening, quickening, renewing, strengthening, and comforting influence are lost gradually, perhaps also insensibly. We lose first our remembrance of them, then our love to them, and then the effect produced by them; the internal graces, as humiliation, sorrow, confidence, love, resignation, patience, and the external virtues, the fruits of righteousness produced by this heavenly graft inserted on a crab-stock. Hence we become barren and withered, and are cut down as cumberers of the ground.—“Lest at any time,” or by any way, or means. “we should let them slip,” &c. This our Saviour taught at large in the parable of the seed which was only retained in one sort of ground out of four; and is confirmed by the experience of all ages. Few who have heard the Gospel keep it as they ought. Some lose their grace in a time of peace and prosperity. “Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked.” The warmth of prosperity (says one) breeds swarms of apostates, as the heat of the sun doth insects in the spring.—Some in a time of persecution and adversity. “When persecution ariseth,” saith Christ, “they fall away.” They go on apace in profession till they come to see the cross. The sight of this puts them quite to a stand, and turns them out of the way. They thought not of it, and do not like it.—Some in the hour of peculiar temptation; for God, in his wisdom, suffers such to come upon the church for its trial, and upon every member of it, that they may be conformed to their Head, who had his special season of temptation. In this trying time many lose the good effects of the word they have heard, either wholly or in some measure. They are cast into a negligent slumber by the opiates of temptation; and when they awake, and consider the

state of their hearts and lives, they find that the whole efficacy of the word is lost.—The *ways* also, whereby this woeful effect is produced, are various; as the love of the world, which made Demas a leaky vessel; (2 Tim. iv. 10;) and choked the fourth part of the seed in the parable. (Matt. xiii. 22.) The love of sin; a vile affection or corrupt passion will make the spiritual vessel full of chinks, so that it will not retain the spiritual water. Again: false doctrine, formality in worship, contentions and divisions among the serious professors of religion, will easily produce, if yielded to, the same unhappy effect.—These burst or break the vessel, and all the water runs out.—

As to the consequences; it implies great sin and guilt, to refuse or neglect to attend to him that speaketh with such clearness and fulness, on matters so important and excellent;—with such authority; not as a servant, but as a Lord;—with such love, having done and suffered so much.—Once, for all, his message being final: “last of all, he sent his Son.”—Great punishment will follow. (Heb. xii. 25; x. 28—31.)—

APPLY,—EXHORT,—ENCOURAGE. — —

CCXVII.

DANGER OF NEGLECTING THE CHRISTIAN
SALVATION.

HEBREWS ii. 3.

*How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation;
which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord,
and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him.*

IT is generally allowed among professing christians, that the truths of the Gospel are not all of equal moment. Some of them are evidently of superior importance, from their enlightening nature, their close connection with other essential truths, the important consequences they draw after them, and their immediate influence upon the present and everlasting salvation of mankind. Of some of the truths of religion we may live and die ignorant, and no permanent evil arise, but of others we cannot continue ignorant without the most fatal and destructive effects. Being ignorant of these, we shall remain in our sins, and shall fail of salvation here and hereafter. Again of those truths which are most important, and the knowledge of which, under the Gospel, is necessary to salvation, some are termed fundamental, as resembling the foundation of a building, and must be known and experienced, before other truths, equally important, can be understood to any good purpose; just as the foundation of a building must be laid before the walls can be erected thereon. Others may be more fitly compared to a superstructure. and are then properly considered and laid to heart when a right foundation has been laid for them.—Now, if these re-

marks are just, is it not an unreasonable conduct in men to occupy their minds, and employ their time, in a curious inquiry into truths of little moment, and not essential to salvation, while they overlook and neglect those of the deepest importance, which are necessary thereto? And is it not a conduct equally irrational and absurd, to aim at making ourselves acquainted with the higher truths of religion, before we have any proper or beneficial knowledge of those that are fundamental? And yet thus unreasonable and preposterous is the conduct of most men: they prefer what is merely circumstantial, and comparatively unimportant in christianity, to what is absolutely essential, and universally useful: and in their choice of books and preachers, consider the gratification of their curiosity, more than the profit of their souls; while others are for raising the superstructure of religion, and going on unto perfection, before they have "laid the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith towards God."—My hearers will easily infer, from my selection of the words just read as the subject of a discourse, that persons of this description will meet with no indulgence on this occasion. My text in awful and alarming language, calls upon me to set before you life and death, blessing and cursing, and seriously to inquire, as being all of us in the presence of God, and on the very brink of death, judgment, and eternity, how we "shall escape if we neglect" the great Gospel salvation; that salvation which, it is but too evident, many of us do neglect, and have neglected long, and which I should neglect myself, in a particular manner, if I were to trifle with you, and spend this solemn hour of divine service in providing for your amusements; while my office, my

conscience, and my God require me to employ it for the profit of your never-dying souls, and in striving to advance your immortal interests. Salvation,—a great salvation,—the neglect of a great salvation,—how shall those escape that neglect it? these must be now important topics of my discourse to you; and as I shall endeavour to treat them with that seriousness their importance demands; so I cannot but hope for the diligent attention of many of you, especially of those whose consciences bear them witness that they are but too much concerned in the awful subjects.—Consider we therefore,

I. WHAT THE SALVATION IS HERE SPOKEN OF.

Some by “salvation” would understand the doctrine of salvation, or the Gospel revealing salvation; the context seems to favour this sense; and yet, as it is a singular sense, and a sense in which perhaps, the word is not taken again in the Bible, it is certainly better not to have recourse to it, if it can be avoided, nor to depart from the ordinary acceptance of the word, unless the text, in connection with the context, render it necessary, which, I apprehend, it does not in this instance. For, understanding “salvation” here, as every where else, in the New Testament, and in many passages of the Old, to mean that spiritual and eternal salvation procured by Christ, and published in the Gospel, where is the impropriety of saying that this was “spoken,” that is declared, “by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him, God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost?” (Ver. 3, 4.) For surely to bring us glad tidings of this salvation, and

confirm by signs and wonders the doctrine of it, was the grand object of our Lord's ministry, as it was also of his Apostles. By salvation, therefore, in this passage, I understand the same thing with that which is meant Rom. i. 16; Eph. i. 13; ii. 8; Tit. iii. 4, 5; Heb. v. 9; 1 Pet. i. 9—11; and in abundance of other places.

Now of this salvation I observe, that it is partly at least, a present salvation. (2 Cor. vi. 2; Eph. ii. 8; 2 Tim. i. 9; Tit. iii. 5.) This will appear clear, if we consider that it implies, a deliverance, a restoration, and a preservation. A *deliverance* from darkness to light; (Acts xxvi. 18; Eph. v. 8; 1 Pet. ii. 9;) from guilt, condemnation, and wrath. Thus were the Ephesians saved; (ch. i. 5—7;) the Corinthians; (1 Epis. vi. 11;) for in their natural state men are sinful, guilty, condemned under wrath; and by the christian salvation are acquitted, justified, made to experience reconciliation and peace; a deliverance from bondage, subjection to the power of the Devil, (Eph. ii. 1, 2; 2 Tim. ii. 26;) to the world, (Gal. i. 4;) its prosperity, adversity, the "desire of the flesh, of the eye, and the pride of life;" (1 John ii. 16;) to the flesh, (Gal. v. 17,) "the law in our members," (Rom. vii. 5, 23;) to sin, (John viii. 34;) to death, and the fear of it. (Heb. ii. 15.) [Describe the liberty consequent on a believing reception of Christ Jesus; (Isai. xlii. 6, 7; lxi. 1; Acts xxvi. 18;) from the power of Satan, (1 John iii. 8;) from the world, (Gal. i. 4;) the flesh, (Rom. vii. 25;) sin and death, (Rom. viii. 2; Heb. ii. 14;) a deliverance from depravity and weakness, the state of man by nature, (Gen. vi. 5; Isai. i. 5, 6; Jer. xvii. 9;) salvation from which is mentioned Tit. ii. 14; Eph. v. 25; Tit. iii. 5; 1 Cor. vi. 11; Ezek. xxxvi. 25; a deliverance from mi-

sery into happiness; wretchedness necessarily arising from all the preceding particulars, viz., darkness of mind, guilt, bondage, depravity; but peace and happiness as necessarily springing from the gracious deliverance which has been spoken of:—in consequence of which, divine light is poured into the understanding, the will and affections are released from the tyranny of sin and Satan, the conscience sprinkled from guilt, the whole soul purified, and endowed with strength and power, to do the will of God.]—A *restoration* to the blessings lost by the fall; the favour of God, (Eph. i. 6; Rom. v. 2; and the being made his children, (2 Cor. vi. 17;) his image, Eph. iv. 22—24; 2 Cor. v. 17; 2 Pet. i. 4; Jer. xxxi. 33; Deut. xxx. 6;) communion with him, (Ps. lxxviii. 18; Eph. ii. 21, 22; 2 Cor. vi. 16; John xvii. 21; xiv. 23; 1 John i. 3.)—A *preservation* to eternal life, (1 Pet. i. 5, 9; 1 John iii. 2;) life, felicity, glory and riches in the kingdom of God for ever and ever. —

II. THE GREATNESS OF THIS SALVATION.

This appears—if we consider the subject of it, man, the chief of the Divine works here below: the whole man; his body fearfully and wonderfully made, saved from a state next to annihilation, from dust and corruption, into a better state than that from which it fell, into incorruption, immortality, and glory; his soul, rational and immortal, from ignorance and sin, depravity, weakness, and misery, the tyranny of Satan, his angels, the most powerful and malicious enemies of man. If we consider the nature and extent of it; being a spiritual salvation. — — [Compare it with a temporal one in all the instances above mentioned, and show its superiority, as with temporal darkness and blindness,

temporal guilt and condemnation, temporal bondage, sickness, and weakness.] It extends to every faculty and member, and probably to the habitation of man.— (Rom. viii. 19—23; Rev. xxi. 5.)—The duration, the eternal duration of it; deliverance from any small evil, and the possession of some small good, if continued for ever, may be justly regarded as very great and valuable. — Its author, whether, first, the original and primary author, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, (Tit. iii. 4; 1 Pet. i. 3,) whose glory and majesty are great beyond expression, (Isai. lvii. 15; xl. 12, 15—17:) Or, its immediate author, the Son of God, (Heb. v. 9,) whose dignity and glory are set forth ch. i. The salvation is great from him. (Ver. 3.) A small favour, if done to us by a great personage, is accounted great. What shall we say then of this salvation, infinitely great in itself, as being spiritual and eternal, and being conferred by a person infinitely great and glorious, so that two infinities meet in it. The eternity of the grace, and the author of it, each give it an infinite value.—Consider also the great things done and suffered to procure for us, and confer upon us, this salvation:—by the Father. (John iii. 16; 1 John iv. 9.) His only begotten Son, infinitely glorious in himself, and infinitely dear to him, was yet delivered up, to unspeakable sufferings, in order to procure for us this salvation! A person infinitely glorious, delivered to such suffering by one to whom he was infinitely dear!—By the Lord Jesus Christ, who left the felicity and glory of the heavenly world, and emptied himself, (Phil. ii. 6,) became poor, (2 Cor. viii. 9,) was incarnated (John i. 14; Heb. ii. 14,) partook of meanness and suffering, fulfilled a laborious life, and endured an ignominious, painful, and accursed death. — —

It appears, therefore, whatever opinion the blinded and infatuated children of men may entertain of this salvation; though they may hold it very cheap, and be disposed to sell all right and title to it, for the embrace of a harlot, a cup of strong drink, or, as Esau gave up his birthright, for a mess of pottage, yet that it is very invaluable, yea, of infinite value:—In the judgment of God, who gives his Son, an infinite gift, for it. —In that of Christ, who, for a time, gives up his infinite glory, submits to unspeakable sufferings, and pays down an infinite price to purchase this salvation.—Of angels, who delight to minister to the heirs of this salvation, “desire to look into it,” (1 Pet. i. 12,) and rejoice when the first step is taken in the way that leads to it, (Luke xv. 7,) as they did at the birth of him who came to publish and purchase it.—Of those that have obtained it, who cease not to give thanks for it night and day, and shout salvation to God and the Lamb. (Rev. i. 5.)—Of those that have lost it; witness the rich man, who would have judged a drop of water from the tip of Lazarus’s finger a great benefit.—Of all the servants of God on earth, of every nation and age, who show the sense they have of the value of this salvation, by striving, running, wrestling, fighting, suffering, bleeding, dying, and all to attain this salvation.—Now, come forward, thou neglecter of this salvation, and avow thyself to be wiser than saints on earth or in heaven, than angels, Christ, and even God.—But who does this? Can it be supposed that any are so wicked, so foolish, such enemies to themselves and to God, as wilfully to neglect this salvation?—This leads me to show,

III. WHO NEGLECT THIS SALVATION.

The original word means, who do not *care for*, or are not concerned about it, and, consequently, take no pains to become partakers of it. All do, and will neglect this salvation,—who do not see their want of it, and their undone state without it;—who are not convinced of its absolute necessity and great excellency;—who do not earnestly and perseveringly desire it, and “hunger and thirst” for the enjoyment of it;—who do not diligently seek it in the use of the means which God has appointed, the private and public means of grace, such as hearing, reading, and meditating on the word of God, prayer, watchfulness, self-denial, and taking up the daily cross;—who do not humble themselves before God, in true, genuine repentance, and bring forth fruit worthy of repentance;—who do not embrace the Gospel in all its branches, its truths, precepts and promises, its doctrines, privileges, and duties; and the Lord Jesus, its blessed author, in all his offices and characters, with faith, love, and new obedience.—And they, in some measure at least, neglect this salvation who, having experienced one part of it, as justification and the divine favour, yet do not go forward with zeal and diligence in pursuit of what remains, viz. perfect holiness and eternal glory.—Finally, those most of all neglect this salvation, who having “begun in the spirit, end in the flesh;” who fall from grace, and turn from the holy commandment delivered to them; whose case the Apostle represents in a just but awful light, ch. vi. 4—8; x. 26—31; xii. 25—27. From which passages the reader may learn,

IV HOW THE NEGLECTERS OF THIS SALVATION IN GENERAL, AND BACKSLIDERS IN PARTICULAR, MAY EXPECT TO ESCAPE.

The truth, with respect to this; is,—That mankind in general, being by nature and practice in a lost state, a state of ignorance and sin, of guilt, condemnation and wrath, of depravity, weakness, and misery, and this salvation being provided for their recovery; they who neglect it, of course, remain in that lost estate, unenlightened, unpardoned, unchanged, unholy, and unhappy. They sin against the remedy, the only remedy which the wisdom of God hath found out for man's restoration, and therefore must perish without remedy.—They have, moreover, to expect a super-added and increased misery, for neglecting the glorious salvation provided for them, at so great an expense of love and sufferings, and with so great an apparatus of grace and mercy. This passage proves this point to a demonstration, as do also the other paragraphs above referred to.—We may observe the greatness of the salvation—its eternity—the glory of its Author—the amazing sufferings he endured—the various and extraordinary gifts and operations of the Holy Ghost, which in former ages sealed and signalized this divine dispensation—the pardon and grace offered to us, and urged upon us—the advices, exhortations, entreaties, and warnings of ministers and others, who have had our salvation at heart:—in short, the various means made use of, in various ways, to bring us to the knowledge and enjoyment of this salvation:—All must aggravate our guilt, and increase our condemnation and future punishment, if we neglect it. —

CCXVIII.

A CAUTION AGAINST UNBELIEF, AND THE
MEANS AND NECESSITY OF PREVENTING
IT.

HEBREWS iii. 12, 13.

Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily while it is called To-day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

As this Epistle to the Hebrews is peculiarly doctrinal, so it is also peculiarly hortatory. The author of it fails not as he proceeds, to make a pointed application of every doctrine he advances, and continually intermixes exhortation with his instruction. And in this he is an example worthy to be imitated by all that speak or write on sacred subjects. They should also, if they wish really to profit their hearers or readers, take particular care to apply the doctrine they advance to their consciences, and earnestly exhort them to live and act in conformity with the truths of christianity. There are two ways of making this application. The doctrinal part of a discourse may be finished first, and the application and exhortation may follow and close the whole, which is the plan pursued in most of St. Paul's other Epistles, and in those abridged discourses of his, and of St. Peter, recorded in the Acts. Or, as in this Epistle, an application may be made of every thing advanced as we pass along, and exhortation may be mixed with doctrine from first to last.—Let me

make another observation here respecting this admirable Epistle. As the author of it was addressing the Hebrews, who acknowledged the authority and divine inspiration of the Old Testament, so he fails not to make use of the great advantage this gave him to enforce, with better success, christian doctrine and practice; thereby teaching us, not only the harmony of the two Testaments, and that the Gospel is contained in the Law, but also that the best way to prove, explain, and enforce any branch of true religion, is to appeal and refer to the Word of God, with respect to such at least as acknowledge the authority of it; and to do this in the words which the Holy Ghost hath taught. And it is observable, that, in quoting the Old Testament, the Apostle every where in this Epistle takes for granted, that it was given by inspiration of God. Thus, “As the Holy Ghost saith, To-day, if ye will hear my voice, harden not your hearts,” &c. (Ver. 7—11.) To which verses my text is added as a particular inference. We have,

I. A CAUTION AGAINST A PARTICULAR EVIL.

“An evil heart of unbelief,” &c. The evil is unbelief, which, it is suggested, exists in an evil heart; it is the parent of all evil, and the very essence of it lies “in departing from God,” “the living God,” the fountain of all our life, holiness and happiness.—Unbelief is opposed to faith, to that faith which is so well defined, and so much celebrated in this Epistle. This faith has for its object,—those truths of which the visible creation and light of nature, in a measure, give evidence, viz., the being and attributes of God, a future state, a spiritual and eternal world; (Rom. i. 20:)—

God's revealed will, evidenced by the internal excellency of the things revealed, and by miracles and prophecies;—the grand doctrines revealed, known by searching the Scriptures, and by prayer for Divine illumination, and a spirit of discernment and feeling:—the record which God hath given of his Son in his person and offices, incarnation, life, &c. his love and sufferings, humiliation and exaltation, in which sense faith implies coming to him, confiding in him, and receiving him;—the promises and threatenings of God, the sanctions of his Law and Gospel.

Unbelief, which is opposed to this faith, is distinguished by some into negative and positive. Negative unbelief is whenever any believe not because they have not yet had the means of faith, viz., the Scriptures, or the truths declared in them, as the heathen nations. Such, supposing they believe, and lay to heart, the truths of what is called natural religion, cannot be said to have in them “an evil heart of unbelief.” Positive unbelief is where men believe not, though they enjoy the means of faith. This latter is here meant, and in it consist some of the highest workings of the depraved nature of man; it being, on many accounts, the greatest provocation of which we can be guilty towards God; for it is in opposition to God in all the perfections of his nature, and in the whole revelation of his will. And therefore the Gospel, which is a declaration of grace, mercy, and pardon, and which indeed condemns all sin, yet denounces final condemnation only against this sin. “He that believeth not shall be damned.” (Mark xvi. 16.)—To explain this, let it be observed, that faith, which is found in “a good heart,” or a heart influenced by Divine grace, implies sincerity, or a real

desire to know and obey the truth, rejecting those prepossessions, prejudices, and corrupt and carnal interests, which stand in the way of our knowledge and submission to the will of God, simplicity in receiving the Divine testimony without reasoning, humility, teachableness, an obedient heart, self-denial with regard to the lusts that oppose obedience, renunciation of the world and sin, courage and fortitude to meet the sufferings to which our faith may expose us, resignation to the Divine will and disposal, and acquiescence therein. — But unbelief implies the reverse of all this; as insincerity, and the yielding ourselves up to the prepossessions of sinful prejudices and interests, pride of understanding, and reasonings that exalt themselves against the knowledge of God, untractableness, a stubborn and disobedient spirit, self-indulgence, the love of the world and of sin, cowardice, impatience, &c.; all these demonstrate an evil and unrenewed heart. In such an heart, *i. e.* in the original depravation of the mind, and our natural enmity to God, this unbelief has its root; and in springing up, it increases this evil of our nature.—For it departs from the “living God.” Faith draws us near to him in the consideration and knowledge of him, in contemplating his glory, in desire after him, gratitude to him, and delight in him: continually aspiring after a conformity to him, and longing to enjoy union and communion with him; but unbelief produces directly contrary effects, rendering the mind averse to contemplate and know God in his perfections, works and dispensations, leading us to dislike and shun all intercourse with him. It worships him as though he were not “the living God,” but a vain idol.

The Apostle's caution against an heart of unbelief implies two things,—That we beware lest, through refusing to consider the evidence of the truth, or the goodness and excellency of the things proposed as objects of our faith, we should continue in our natural unbelief, and never attain faith.—Lest we should reject or decline from the faith after it has been received, through neglect of those means which promote its continuance and increase, viz., the Word of God, prayer, christian fellowship, the Lord's supper, &c.; through yielding to temptations from any quarter, and to the love of sin; through unwatchfulness, and the neglect of self-denial and mortification; through relapsing into our former habits, and imitating the spirit and conduct of the carnal and worldly part of mankind around us; through fear of reproach and persecution from those that are enemies to the truth and grace of God.

II. THE MEANS RECOMMENDED TO PREVENT THE EVIL TO BE FEARED.

“Exhort one another,” &c.—It is justly observed by Dr. Owen, that “many practical duties are neglected, because they are not understood, and they are not understood because they are supposed to have no difficulty in them.” The duty of constant exhortation, that is, of persuading men to perseverance and growth in faith, love, and obedience; to watchfulness and diligence in the ways of God; and attention to every duty which we owe to God, our neighbour, and ourselves, is the most important part of the ministerial office. It is, however, not confined to ministers: it should be performed also mutually among believers; and, in order to the right performance of it, the following things are

necessary.—A deep concern for one another's salvation and growth in grace. Wisdom and understanding in divine things. Care that we speak only words of truth and soberness, for only such words will be attended with authority, and have the desired effect. Avoiding those morose and severe expressions which savour of unkindness, and adopting words of mildness, tenderness, and love, at least towards such as are well disposed, and desirous to know and do the will of God. Avoiding levity, and always speaking with seriousness. Attention to time, place, persons, circumstances. A suitable example in the persons exhorting, which gives weight and influence to every advice that is given; in imitation of the Apostle, who could say, "Be ye followers of me as I am of Christ." We must be unwearied in this duty, and exhort one another daily, in every proper season, and on all fit occasions, whenever we happen to be in company one with another; and lastly, "while it is called to-day," while the season for doing it continues, and therefore now, without delay, the time for performing this duty being both very short and very uncertain. — —

III. THE MOTIVE IMPELLING TO OBSERVE THE CAUTION, AND USE THE MEANS FOR PREVENTING THE EVIL.

"Lest any of you be hardened," that is, rendered blind and insensible as to the nature, excellency, necessity, and importance of spiritual things. Impenetrable to mercy or justice, promises or threatenings, to the word, providence, or grace of God, stubborn and irreclaimable. Abandoned, and finally given up, of God, to sin and its consequences.—It should be well

observed, this awful effect is not usually produced suddenly, and all at once, but by slow degrees, and perhaps insensibly, just as the hand of a labouring man is wont gradually to contract a callousness. It is effected, the Apostle says, “by the deceitfulness of sin,” probably, first, by yielding to, instead of resisting and mortifying, sinful dispositions and corrupt passions, which by degrees produce those sinful practices which not only “grieve,” but “quench and do despite to the Spirit of grace,” and cause him to withdraw his influences from us;—by which the mind becomes indisposed and averse to attend to the voice of God, in his word or providence; to consider or yield to his counsel and authority;—by which also the conscience is stupified, the will, affections, and all the powers of the soul, are pre-occupied and engaged in the service of sin and Satan, of the world and the flesh.—The Apostle terms sin “deceitful,” because it promises the satisfaction it never yields: persuades us we may venture to yield a little to its solicitations, but need not go far;—that we may yield at this time, this once, but need not hereafter;—that we may and can repent, and reform when we will;—that God will not be extreme to mark little things;—and that he is merciful, and will not be so strict as ministers are wont to urge, in fulfilling his threatenings. — —

CCXIX.

THE DUTY OF FEAR IN RESPECT OF THE
PROMISED REST.

HEBREWS iv. 1.

Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.

As the religion of Jesus is made up of two things, of faith, and works, the fruits of faith, and is a holy mixture of confidence and humility, of hope and fear, of joy and sorrow, of thankfulness and watchfulness, of liberty and service; so its principal hinderances are two, despondency and presumption. The former of these, despondency, arising from ignorance of the grace of God, would persuade us that because of our past sins, which have probably been many and aggravated, and our present corruptions so various and strong, as also because of our many, mighty, subtle, and malicious enemies, we shall never be able to attain the crown of life, the everlasting kingdom of our God and Saviour. By this hinderance, therefore, we are discouraged, and cast down, under a sense of our guilt and weakness, and thereby enervated, divested of our strength, and made an easy prey to our enemies. On the other hand, presumption, which also has its source in ignorance, viz., of what is required of those who have received divine grace, makes us too confident of attaining this kingdom; and lifting us up with pride and self-conceit, renders us careless, lukewarm, and indolent. Thus it lays us open, like a city without gates or walls, to the assaults of our foes on every side.—We are continually cautioned against both of these evils in

the sacred Scripture: we are guarded against them especially in this Epistle, which, while it comprises every important branch of christian doctrine, and displays at large the grace of God in Christ Jesus, fails not to exhort us, on the one hand, to confide in that grace, and to be on our guard against unbelief and dejection; and, on the other, to improve it to purposes for which it is given us, and not sink into sloth or carelessness. In short, this Epistle is an admirable discourse on all the offices of Christ, and therefore furnishes us with an antidote against every evil, especially against the two now mentioned. For what can be a better preservative against despair or discouragement on account of past sins, than the knowledge of Christ's sacrifice and intercession: or a better defence against self-confidence and negligence, than the consideration of his holy doctrine and righteous reign.—I am not sure which of these things you are in general most in danger from: probably some from the one, and some from the other; and, it is likely, not a few from both, but particularly the latter. For surely you are less in earnest than you ought to be concerning your best and eternal welfare. Having therefore lately cautioned you against “an evil heart of unbelief,” and exhorted you to “hold fast your confidence, and your rejoicing of hope firm unto the end;” I now say, “Let us fear lest a promise being left you of entering,” &c.—The words are an inference from the context. (See ch. iii. 16—iv. 1.)—Consider,

I WHAT IS THE REST HERE SPOKEN OF.

There is an allusion here to the rest of Canaan, into which the Israelites entered after being delivered out of the bondage of Egypt, where they had no rest day

nor night, passing the Red sea, traversing that terrible and howling wilderness, overcoming their enemies, and passing over Jordan. And to the rest of the sabbath, (ver. 4, 9, 10,) wherein God rested from all his works, and in which we also, when we keep it, rest from our works; approach and worship God, and rest, or are refreshed thereby. These are an emblem of a rest in heaven, which some think is chiefly meant here, into which we enter, when finally delivered from the bondage of sin and Satan, of the world, and the flesh, and the fear of death. We shall then rest from all the journeyings, labours, and conflicts of the present life, and shall be refreshed and satisfied in the everlasting worship and enjoyment of God. — —

But, preparatory to this, there is a rest on earth, which a great scholar and divine, Dr. Owen, judged to be principally referred to, in this place. I mean,—the rest of faith, and justification by faith; (Matt. xi. 28;) rest to the understanding and the conscience. When we come aright to Christ, and receive him as a “Teacher come from God,” the wisdom, word, and truth of God, the understanding rests from all the fluctuations and uncertainties of error, is no longer tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine, but finds satisfaction and delight in the knowledge of the truth; the judgment is settled on all the points on which the human mind, when properly awakened, is most anxious for information. When we come aright to Christ as a Priest, and rely on his sacrifice and intercession, the conscience is also at rest: we are delivered from the curse of the law, the wrath of God, the sense of guilt, from slavish fears of God, and the spirit of bondage through our receiving the Spirit of adoption, and from tormenting fears of death and hell. We rest in peace with God,

and peace of conscience, in confidence towards him. access to him, and union and communion with him.—The rest of hope, and of the patience of hope. Man has too many and too manifest notices of a future life from reason and revelation, from the light of nature, and the light of grace, to be unconcerned and indifferent about it. If he thinks at all, he must be anxious to be satisfied as to three things: whether there really is another life; what sort of a life it is; and whether he is entitled to happiness in it. Now, by faith in Christ, he is fully satisfied as to these heads: by faith in the doctrine and resurrection of Christ, he is satisfied as to the two former, and by faith in the mediation of Christ, whereby he is made a child of God by adoption and regeneration, he is assured of the latter; being a child, he is an heir; but he must wait with patience for the inheritance till he come of age. “If we hope for what we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.” (Rom. viii. 24.) “Ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.” (Heb. x. 36.) “After he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.” (Heb. vi. 15.) Having come within sight of the port, we must wait, like a ship at anchor, till wind and tide favour our entrance, and in this patience of hope we rest. Hope, like an anchor of the soul, keeps it “sure,” that it may not be driven back, and so lose the ground it has gained; “and steadfast,” that it may not be tossed to and fro. And thus it weathers out and outrides all the remaining storms of affliction. This keeps it resigned, patient, and contented amidst all, teaching it, that this “light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for it a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” (2 Cor. iv. 17)—The rest of love, and holiness by love. The mind of

man, formed for the admiration and enjoyment of the Supreme Good, cannot rest but in him. When it has found the infinitely perfect Jehovah, it has found an object worthy of its highest esteem, desire, delight, acquiescence, and joy. (Ps. cxvi. 7.) Now it rests from the tyrannical power of sin, and Satan, and the world, and the flesh; from accusations of conscience, the vile affections, disorderly passions, and evil tempers of the human heart, pride, self-will, discontent, impatience, anger, malice, envy, &c. It rests in the possession of the mind of Christ, in lowliness, meekness, gentleness, long-suffering; (Matt. xi. 29;) thus Isai. xxxii. 17, 18. The rest of holiness is enjoyed in a measure when we are justified; but it is our privilege to possess it in a higher degree.—The rest of paradise and heaven. The intermediate state, (Rev. xiv. 13,) in which we shall rest from bodily labour and toil, from care and fear of mind, from infirmity, pain, and sickness, persecution and tribulation; from temptation, sin, and sorrow; from spiritual striving, labouring, running, wrestling, fighting, praying, watching, denying ourselves, crucifying the flesh, &c., shall rest with Jesus, and “the spirits of the just made perfect.” After the resurrection, we shall obtain a new body, not liable to infirmity, sickness, or death, but vigorous, healthy, immortal; its members formed for beauty and use; its senses all inlets to pleasure. We shall inhabit the new heavens and new earth, stored with every thing adapted for our instruction, convenience, and delight; shall be introduced to the society of saints and angels, and shall enjoy the vision and fruition of the infinite and ever-blessed God. — —

II. TO WHOM? AND IN WHAT SENSE IS A PROMISE LEFT OF ENTERING INTO THIS REST?

None are excluded who do not exclude themselves. Glad tidings of it are brought to all. (Luke ii. 10.) All are invited to glory; (Rev. xxii. 17;) to grace. (Isai. lv. 1; John vii. 37.) But the promise of it is not made to all. Though all *may* enter this rest, God has not promised that all shall.—But to whom has God promised the rest of faith and of justification? Certainly to those that comply with the conditions or terms required, viz.; repentance towards God, (1 John i. 9; Prov. xxviii. 13; Isai. i. 16—18; lv. 6; Matt. iii. 7—10,) and faith in Christ. (Acts xiii. 38.) We cannot, in the nature of things, have the rest of faith but by faith. We must believe the truth, and it must come to us, “not in word only, but also in power,” that we may have rest in the understanding and conscience.—To whom has he promised the rest of hope? To those that lay a foundation for it, by obtaining adoption, and the spirit of it, as well as regeneration by faith in Christ, who build on that foundation God has laid, and who, having liberty and power so to do, cast “anchor within the veil.” (Heb. vi. 20.) —To whom has God promised the rest of holiness? To those that exercise repentance for their remaining corruptions and deficiencies, (1 John i. 9,) who believe on Jesus, and the inestimable promises given us in him; (John vii. 37, 38; Acts xxvi. 18;) who pray sincerely, fervently, importunately, perseveringly; (Ezek. xxxvi. 37; Luke xi. 5—13;) who deny themselves, and crucify the flesh; (Rom. viii. 13;) who abide in Christ, and bring forth much fruit, using the grace given to them. (John xv. 2—6; Matt. xiii. 12.) To whom has he promised the rest of heaven?—To those that continue in the faith, (Col. i. 23; Heb. x. 38;) in hope, (Col. i. 23; Heb. iii. 6, 14; vi. 11;) in love, (1 John iv. 16, 17; 1 Cor. xiii. 8;) those that obey, (Heb. v. 9;

Rev. xxii. 14;) that persevere in well-doing, (Gal. vi. 9; Rom. ii. 7;) that watch, overcome, and endure to the end. (Rev. ii. 7, 10, 17; iii 3, 5, 21; Matt. xxiv. 42; Luke xxi. 36.) Grace, whereby we may comply with these conditions, is promised to all that seek aright. —

III. IN WHAT SENSE, AND FOR WHAT END, OUGHT SUCH TO FEAR LEST THEY SHOULD COME SHORT OF IT?

There should be no fear of diffidence or distrust, of doubting or uncertainty, as to the event of our faith and obedience. For God will fulfil his promises to the persons to whom they are made, and in the sense in which they are made.—Nor are we to fear lest he should deny us grace, that we may comply with the required conditions.—Neither should there be a fear of timidity, or dismayedness of mind, upon a prospect of difficulties and dangers in the way, for this is the sluggard's fear, who cries, "there is a lion in the way, I shall be slain."—But we must maintain a *fear of jealousy* respecting ourselves, lest, having run well for a time, we should be hindered, lest we should grow lukewarm and indolent, formal and dead, and so should fall from that state of grace in which we had once stood. Those who have enjoyed the best means, and for the longest time, and yet have not improved them, nor entered even into the first rest, have most cause to fear.—What cause have sinners, whether open or secret,—Pharisees,—backsliders,—and lukewarm professors,—to be afraid! They stand in need of an awakening and alarming fear.—It is necessary to have also a *watchful* and *careful* fear, inducing us to be earnest and diligent to secure our high calling, and now, immediately, to enter into this rest. — —

